

**ESCHATOLOGICAL VISIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: FROM A  
PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALIST INTERPRETATION TOWARDS A  
CONTEXTUAL KOREAN CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC**

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as a thesis for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Religion in November 2018

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis applies the hermeneutical approach developed by Ernst M. Conradie, and by David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, to understanding the eschatological visions of the New Testament in relation to the environment, taking into particular account South Korea's environmental situation and the traditions of biblical interpretation in the Korean Protestant Church.

Chapter 1 illustrates the history of Korean Christianity, the contribution of western missionaries to Korea, and how the early Korean Christian leaders shaped Korean Protestantism. Chapter 2 then explicates the Premillennial Dispensationalism of western missionaries to Korea and the embracing of this doctrine by the Korean mainline Church. Moreover, this chapter unveils the Korean mainline Church's inherited understanding of the eschatological vision of the New Testament through certain theological orientations, especially Premillennial Dispensationalism, as propagated by early western missionaries and early Korean Christian leaders. This particular interpretation of New Testament eschatology played a pivotal role not only in focusing on certain doctrinal constructs such as the total destruction of the earth, rapture, and individual salvation but also in shaping the negative viewpoint of the Korean Christian towards nature.

Chapters 3 and 4 show the understanding by Korean mainline churches of the eschatological visions of the New Testament by examining the interpretation of key texts for this tradition, 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16, through the lens of these doctrinal constructs - rapture, individual salvation and the total destruction of the earth. In addition, these two chapters introduce alternative readings of these texts to challenge this tradition of interpretation.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn instead to two texts which may stand at the centre of an ecologically reconfigured interpretation of New Testament eschatology. Chapter 5 interprets Rom. 8:19-23 through ecological doctrinal constructs for developing a rereading of the eschatological visions of the New Testament, with emphasis on the doctrinal constructs of future hope for creation and its liberation and restoration. Furthermore, this chapter provides an eco-ethical model for Christian believers – the *kenotic ethic* which is based on Christ's reconciling and liberating ministry towards people and the rest of creation.

Chapter 6 analyses the New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21:1-22:7 in order to show the potentially positive eco-implications of New Testament eschatology, such as salvific economy of the New Jerusalem, the slaughtered Lamb, and the Tree of Life. The vision may be suggested to be one which stresses the connections between humanity, God and the earth, rather than one in which select humans are raptured from the earth. In addition, this chapter proposes ecological ethics through the image of the slaughtered Lamb which implies Christ's self-sacrifice for the earth and its residents.

Overall, the thesis seeks to challenge the dominant influence of premillennial Dispensationalist interpretation of New Testament eschatology in Korean Protestantism, and to open up the possibilities for a more ecologically positive engagement with the New Testament and its eschatological visions, that may hopefully encourage more environmental concern on the part of these Korean Christians.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate all who contributed to the completion of this thesis. First of all, I give thanks to God for the ability to do the work.

I am so grateful to the community in the Theology and Religion department at the University of Exeter for their gracious support. I am deeply thankful to my supervisors, professors David Horrell and Christopher Southgate, who encouraged and directed me. It is with their supervision that this thesis came into existence, and the challenges they put before me brought this work to its completion. For any faults I take full responsibility. I want it to be noted that all Korean- English translation used in this thesis is mine.

I would also like to thank Rachel Addison for copy-editing and proof-reading my thesis. I extend a huge debt of gratitude to my fellow students who have been challenging and productive critics – particular thanks go to Scott Yip and Hayoung Kim.

I am also so thankful to my family, including my father and mother in law, who have supported and encouraged me throughout the time of my research. I am especially thankful to my lovely wife and daughter.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE/DECLARATION.....	1
ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	323
INTRODUCTION.....	12
0.1. Background of the Thesis: The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project, and the Korean Churches' Responses.....	12
0.2. Thesis Purpose and Aims: Rethinking Interpretations of the New Testament Eschatological Texts.....	18
0.3. A Brief History of the Research.....	27
0.3.1. The Two Reading Strategies of the Bible: Reading of resistance of Ecological Agenda or Reading of Recovery of Ecological Wisdom in the Bible.....	28
0.4 Methodology.....	34
0.4.1. Uncertainty and Ambivalence of the Biblical Texts.....	34
0.4.2. The Importance of Context in Interpreting the Bible.....	35

0.4.3. The Current Ecological Context in the World.....	36
0.4.4. Ernst M. Conradie, David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt and Christopher Southgate's Hermeneutical Approaches.....	37
0.5. The Thesis Design.....	51
<b>CHAPTER 1: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SPREAD OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY IN KOREA.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>1.1. A Short History of Christianity in Korea from 1770s to 2000s.....</b>	<b>55</b>
1.1.1. Catholicism in Korea (1770 1884).....	55
1.1.2. Commencement and Settlement of Korean Protestantism (1884 – 1910).....	57
1.1.3. Korean Protestantism under Japanese Colonialism (1910 1945).....	60
1.1.4. The Correlation Between Capitalism in South Korea and the Explosive Growth of Christianity.....	63
1.1.5. The Korean War and the Dissolution of the Korean Protestant Church (1945-1960).....	66
1.1.6. A Steep Growth in both the Korean Protestant Church and Economic Development (1960s-1990s).....	69
1.1.7. A Period of Stagnation and Decline in Christian Membership (1990s to Today).....	72
<b>1.2. Contribution of the Western Missionaries to Korea in the Fields of Education and National Health.....</b>	<b>74</b>
1.2.1. Medical Activities.....	74
1.2.2. Educational Activities.....	75

<b>CHAPTER 2: ESCHATOLOGY, PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY IN KOREA.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>2.1. Eschatology of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century in America and its Influence on Western Missionaries to Korea.....</b>	<b>81</b>
2.1.1. Premillennialism (Historical Premillennialism and Premillennial Dispensationalism), Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, and Dispensationalism.....	81
2.1.2. The Theological Background of the Early Western Missionaries to Korea.....	87
<b>2.2. A Brief History of the Dissemination of Premillennial Dispensationalism among Korean Christians through the Early Western Missionaries to Korea.....</b>	<b>91</b>
2.1.1. A Brief History of Premillennial Dispensationalism.....	91
2.2.2. Premillennial Dispensationalism: The Theology of the Early American Missionaries to Korea.....	92
2.2.2.1. <i>Literal Interpretation of the Bible</i> .....	93
2.2.2.2. <i>The Second Coming of Christ in Premillennial Dispensationalism</i> .....	95
2.2.2.3. <i>Dispensational Concept of Israel and the Church</i> .....	96
2.2.2.4. <i>The Influence of the Pyongyang Presbyterian Theological Seminary</i> .....	97
<b>2.3. The Influence of the Early Korean Christian Leaders.....</b>	<b>107</b>
2.3.1. Seon-Ju Gil (1869-1935).....	107
2.3.2. Ik-Du Kim (1874-1950).....	109
2.3.3. Orientation of Eschatology of the Korean Protestant Church after Liberation from Japanese's Occupation (1945 – present day).....	111

<b>2.4. Ecological Shortcomings of Premillennial Dispensationalism.....</b>	<b>116</b>
2.4.1. A Pessimistic Attitude about the Future.....	116
2.4.2. The Rapture (Eco-unfriendly Eschatology).....	118
2.4.3. Conclusion.....	119

## **CHAPTER 3: ESCHATOLOGICAL VISIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THROUGH THE HERMENEUTICS OF PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM.....122**

<b>3.1. The Doctrinal Constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism.....</b>	<b>124</b>
3.1.1. <i>The First Principle: Rapture</i> .....	124
3.1.2. <i>The Second Principle: The Irreversible Fate of the Earth</i> .....	126
3.1.3. <i>The Third Principle: The Incurable Sinfulness of the Present World..</i>	127
3.1.4. <i>The Fourth Principle: The Impending Catastrophic End of the Earth.....</i>	129
3.1.5. <i>The Fifth Principle: Dichotomy (Separation) Between Humans and Nature.....</i>	132

<b>3.2. Main Biblical Texts in the Doctrinal Constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism: 1 Thess. 4:13–18, and the Book of Revelation (6–16).....</b>	<b>133</b>
3.2.1. Eschatological Visions in 1 Thess 4:13-18, as seen through Premillennial Dispensationalism.....	135
3.2.1.a General Description of 1 Thess. 4:13-18.....	135
3.2.1.b Reading the Text through the Hermeneutics of Premillennial Dispensationalism in South Korea.....	136
3.2.1.b.i <i>Interpretation of 1 Thess 4:13-18 during The Era of Commencement of Premillennial Dispensationalism (1800 - 1880).....</i>	136

3.2.1.b.ii Interpretation of 1 Thess 4. 13-18 during The Era of Inauguration of the Early Western Missionaries to Korea and the Era of the Early Korean Church Leaders (1884 - 1945).....	141
3.2.1.b.iii Interpretation of 1 Thes 4. 13-18 during The Era of Development and Growth, and the Plateau of Korean Protestantism (1950 –).....	150
3.2.1.c 1 Thess. 4:13–18, the Premillennial Dispensationalist Hermeneutic in South Korea, and its Environmental Implications.....	158
3.2.1.d Other Possible Eschatological Perspectives on 1 Thess. 4:13-18.....	160
3.2.1.e Conclusion.....	164
 <b>CHAPTER 4: ESCHATOLOGICAL VISIONS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION (6-16) IN PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM IN SOUTH KOREA.....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction of this Chapter.....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>4.2 General Description of that Book of Revelation 6-16: the Bowls, Trumpet and Seals of the Apocalypse.....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>4.3 Reading the Book of Revelation through the Hermeneutics of Premillennial Dispensationalism in South Korea.....</b>	<b>171</b>
4.3.1 Interpretation of Rev. 6-16 during The Era of Commencement of Premillennial Dispensationalism (1800 - 1880).....	174
4.3.2 Interpretation of Rev. 6-16 during The Era of Inauguration of the Early Western Missionaries to Korea and the Era of the Early Korean Church Leaders (1884 – 1945).....	175
4.3.3 Interpretation of Rev. 6-16 during The Era of Development, Growth and the Plateau of Korean Protestantism (1950 -).....	180



<b>4.4 The Book of Revelation in Ethics and the Premillennial Dispensationalist Hermeneutic in South Korea .....</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>4.5 Other Possible Eschatological Perspectives on the Book of Revelation...</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>4.6 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>196</b>

## **CHAPTER 5: ESCHATOLOGICAL VISIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF ECOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS.....198**

<b>5.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>198</b>
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<b>5.2 The Eco-Eschatological-Doctrinal Constructs of Ecological Hermeneutics: Five Principles of Eco-New Testament Eschatology.....</b>	<b>201</b>
--	------------

5.2.1 Background of the Doctrinal Constructs: Hope for the Earth.....	202
---	-----

5.2.2 The First Principle: An Earth-Centred Eschatological Vision, not Rapture .....	204
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5.2.3. The Second Principle: The Covenant with the Entire Creation and Incarnation in Jesus Christ.....	208
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5.2.4. The Third Principle: Humanity as Part of the Community of Creation..	212
---	-----

5.2.5. The Fourth Principle of the Self-Expression (Voice) of Creation: Silence, Groaning, and Praise to God .....	215
--	-----

5.2.6. The Fifth Principle: the Vision of the Peaceable Non-Predatory Kingdom of God (New Creation).....	218
--	-----

<b>5.3 Main Biblical Texts in The Eco-Eschatological-Doctrinal Constructs of Ecological Hermeneutics: Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-22:1-5.....</b>	<b>222</b>
--	------------

<b>5.4 Eschatological Visions in Rom. 8:19-23.....</b>	<b>224</b>
--	------------

5.4.1 General Description of Rom. 8:19-23.....	224
--	-----

5.4.2 A Brief Survey of Ecological Readings of Rom. 8: 19-23.....	225
---	-----

5.4.2.1 <i>Brendan Byrne, SJ (1996, 2000, and 2010)</i> .....	226
5.4.2.2 <i>Robert Jewett (2004 and 2006)</i> .....	227
5.4.2.3 <i>Harry H Hahne (2006)</i> .....	229
5.4.2.4 <i>Jonathan Moo (2008)</i> .....	231
5.4.2.5 <i>David Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate (2008 and 2010)</i> .....	233
<b>5.5 An Ecological Reading of Rom. 8:19-23</b> .....	237
5.5.1 The Structure of Rom. 8:19-23.....	238
5.5.2. The Meaning of Creation (κτίσις).....	240
5.5.3 Rom. 8: 20-21 A: Subjection to Futility and the Bondage to Decay of Creation.....	244
5.5.4. Rom. 21B-23: Groaning (birth pangs), the Children of God, and the Liberation of Creation.....	248
5.5.5 Ethics in Romans and the Application of an Ecological Reading to the Korean Interpretative Tradition.....	255
 <b>CHAPTER 6: ESCHATOLOGICAL VISIONS IN REV. 21:1-22:1:1-5</b> .....	260
<b>6.1 Introduction</b> .....	260
<b>6.2 General Description of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5</b> .....	262
<b>6.3 A Brief Survey of Ecological Readings of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5</b> .....	264
6.3.1 Richard Bauckham (1993 and 2010) .....	265
6.3.2 Stephen Moore (2006 and 2014) .....	266
6.3.3 Thomas W. Martin.....	269
6.3.4 Micah D. Kiel.....	271

6.3.5 Barbara R. Rossing.....	273
<b>6.4 An Ecological Reading of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5 .....</b>	<b>276</b>
6.4.1 The Structure of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5 .....	277
6.4.2 Rev. 21:1a: The New Heaven and the New Earth, and No More Sea.....	279
6.4.3 Rev. 21:1b: No More Sea .....	283
6.4.4 Rev. 21: 1-27 Tour of The City of the New Jerusalem .....	289
6.4.4.a “ἀρνίον”: Lamb or Ram ? .....	295
6.4.4.b The Central Scene, Nonviolent Christology and Ethics.....	297
6.4.5 Rev. 22: 2-5: The Tree of Life and its fruit.....	299
6.4.6 Ethics in the Book of Revelation and the Application of an Ecological Reading to the Korean Interpretative Tradition.....	304
<b>CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>310</b>

# **ESCHATOLOGICAL VISIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: FROM A PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALIST INTERPRETATION TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL KOREAN CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **0.1. Background of the Thesis: The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project, and the Korean Churches' Responses**

The lack of environmental concern among the majority of Korean Protestant Christian churches haunts the political as well as the natural landscape of the country. The Four Major Rivers Restoration Project, which took place in South Korea between July 2009 and October 2011 and was initiated by former president Lee Myung-bak – a devout Christian elder in a Presbyterian church – has caused major environmental damage to South Korean rivers. The project officially started with five core goals. These were: 1. Securing water supply; 2. Flood control; 3. Water quality improvement and ecosystem restoration; 4. Development of spaces for cultural and leisure activities; and 5. Regional development around four major rivers (Han, Geum, Nak Dong, and Yeongsan). To achieve these goals, this project required a number of large scale dams to be constructed in the four major rivers, which would inevitably block the flow of water.<sup>1</sup> The project was actually part of the proposal to build a long inland transport canal (340 miles) across the country from Seoul, the largest city of the northernmost

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<sup>1</sup> Ik-Jae Kim and Ho Jeong Kim, "Four Major Rivers Restoration Project of Republic of Korea", *Korea Environmental Policy Bulletin* 3, Vol. VII (2009): 1-12

region of South Korea, to Busan, the largest city of the southernmost region of South Korea.<sup>2</sup> Its impacts have included changing the natural flow of the rivers, increased erosion, a severe algae outbreak, destruction of ecosystems (for example the disappearance of endangered fish), and the separation of people from nature.<sup>3</sup> In July 2009, while most civic organizations, environmental groups and religious groups (including Buddhists and Catholics) participated in a movement against the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project on the basis of the potential environmental damage, most Protestant denominations either supported it or evaded comment on whether they approved of the plan.<sup>4</sup> This was because of the economic benefits of the Project.<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, on December 10, 2009 the Catholic Church of Korea presented the so-called “사 대강 사업 저지를 위한 천주교연대 (Solidarity of the Catholic Church of Korea for Suspending the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project)”. In this manifesto

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<sup>2</sup> The Four Major Rivers Project is officially presented as a multi-purpose growth project on the Han, Nakdong, Geum and Yeongsan Rivers in South Korea. However, in the view of many critics of the project, it is really a camouflaged effort to build a 340 km canal connecting Seoul and Busan, the two largest cities in South Korea. The sites of the project and the actual construction that has been done on it have nothing to do with its stated objectives. See further, Jung Wook Kim, “나는 반대한다: 4대강 토건 공사에 대한 진실 보고서 (I am opposed to it: A True Report about Four Major Rivers Restoration Project of Republic of Korea)”, Seoul, Korea: A Slow Step (2010): 30-34; Sun Jin Yun and Dong Ha Lee, “Agenda Setting and Frame of TV News about 4 Major Rivers Project in Korea”, *ECO: 환경 사회학 연구 (Study of Environmental Sociology)* 140, no. 1 (2010): 7-62.

<sup>3</sup> Min Gull Jeung, “The Four Major Rivers Project: Destruction of East-Asian Ecological Axis as an Example of Social Retrogression Derived from Anti-Ecological Thought”, in *Environmental Philosophy* 10 (2010): 21-43.

<sup>4</sup> Jung Won Na, “4대강 사업에 대한 그리스도인의 응답 – 평화를 이루려면 피조물을 보호하십시오’ (A Response of the Catholic Church in Korea on the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project – Protect a Creature if you want to Achieve Peace)”, *A Seminar of Justice and Peace in 2010*, Catholic’s Eco Forum at Myeongdong Cathedral, April 21, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Shin Young Kim, “4대강사업을 둘러싼 천주교와 개신교의 환경담론 비교 분석: 주교회의, 한기총, NCK를 중심으로 (An Analysis of Environmental Discourses between Catholic and Protestant in Korea Surrounding the Four-River Project: Focused on Critical Discourse Analysis of Statements)”, (Seoul, Korea: M.A Thesis, Department of Environmental Planning, Graduate School of Environmental Studies of Seoul National University, 2013), 92-102.

“이제 우리가 강의 위로가 되어야 합니다 (Now, we must be consolation of a river)”, four codes of conduct were mandated for the Catholic Church of Korea. These were 1. Persistent Life and Peace masses for the peace of the four major rivers; 2. A citizen signature-collecting campaign (i.e., petition) for a reconsideration of the entire Four Major Rivers Restoration Project; 3. Support and action towards election of candidates of local government officials who are in opposition to the project; and 4. Continued life in practice of the declaration and pledge of priests until the desistance of this project.<sup>6</sup> Finally, on March 8, 2010, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea announced a statement entitled “우리는 모든 피조물이 지금까지 다 함께 탄식하며 진통을 겪고 있습니다 (We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now) (NRSV)”. In this manifesto, they requested of the Korean Government that the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project was ended immediately.<sup>7</sup> These actions display the concern and involvement of the Catholic Church in Korea on environmental issues, in organized movements.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the mainline Protestant churches in Korea did not actively participate in the environmental movement against the project. One of the reasons for this is that Protestantism in Korea does not have one standard organization, analogous to Korea’s Catholic Church, which has the authority to

<sup>6</sup> Catholic News 지금 여기 (Now, Here), “4대강사업 저지를 위한 전주교 연대 출범 (The Departure of A Solidarity of Catholic Church of Korea for Suspending of the Four Major Livers Restoration Project)”, Catholic News (December 10, 2009). Available online:

<http://www.catholicnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2806> Last accessed March 20, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> The HanKyoreh Newspaper, ‘Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea announces opposition to Four Rivers Project,’ Mar, 13, 2010. available online:

[http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_national/409868.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/409868.html) Last accessed March 20, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> The Catholic Church in Korea participated in environmental movement systematically from the end of 1980. See Jae-Deuk, Kim and Dong-Ha, Jang, “인간과 환경: 가톨릭환경운동단체의 실태와 과제 (Human and Environment: Catholic Environment Exercise Group’s the Actual Conditions and Subject)”, *인간연구 (Journal of Human Studies)* 3 no. 12, 2007: 1-22.

address social and political problems, including environmental issues. Within Protestantism in Korea there exist two widely recognised organizations: The Christian Council of Korea (CCK) and the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK). CCK represents the conservative position on social issues and has a pro-government orientation. NCCCK inclines towards a progressive position on these issues, including environmental issues. However, these two organizations do not have a strong enough authority to request of churches or congregations systematic movement on social and political issues. This deficiency has prevented clear and informed opposition to this project. Moreover, the majority of Protestant churches in Korea belong to and support the policy of CCK. CCK is composed of sixty-seven denominations and ten Christian groups. NCCCK, on the other hand, has support from just nine denominations and five Christian groups.<sup>9</sup> Just two denominations, the Presbyterian Church of Korea and The General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches, both of which are bigger than other denominations and support CCK, had about 6,000,000 members among 8,616,438 Korean Protestant Christians in 2012.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, which participated actively against the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project and upholds the policy of NCCCK, only had about 306,000 members in 2012.<sup>11</sup> The NCCCK is thus very limited in its influence towards churches and Korean society. In fact, CCK made a statement in support of the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project. CCK also branded the various media outlets which were

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<sup>9</sup> Shin Young Kim, “4대강사업을 둘러싼 천주교와 개신교의 환경담론 비교 분석: 주교회의, 한기총, NCCCK를 중심으로 (An Analysis of Environmental Discourses between Catholic and Protestant in Korea)”, 62-96.

<sup>10</sup> The Presbyterian Church of Korea denomination seceded from CCK on September 20, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> The KukMin Daily Newspaper, ‘The Statistical date of Christian members in the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea,’ October, 31, 2010. Available online: <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0006583491&code=23111113> Last accessed March 20, 2018.

against this project as left-leaning or left-wing supporters of North Korea.<sup>12</sup> These figures not only indicate an orientation of indifference of the Korean Protestant Church towards environmental issues in Korea – they also reveal why Protestantism in Korea cannot deal with these issues properly and systematically.

The South Korean ecosystem is in a precarious situation in general, not only because of a serious sandy dust phenomenon related to the rapid industrialization of China but also due to radiation leaks from Japan's nuclear power plants and because of global warming which causes further contamination of Korea's air, earth, rivers, and sea.<sup>13</sup>

The mainline Protestant Korean support for the Four Rivers Restoration Project is even more striking when one notes that an international conference of the World Council of Churches entitled "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation" was held in Seoul in 1990. Despite this conference's emphasis on care of the environment, the majority of Korean Protestant churches have failed to recognize or respond to the ecological issues in the country.

Korean churches actually now have great potential power for addressing and ameliorating today's environmental issues in South Korea; about twenty-five per cent of the total population of Korea are Christians, and Christians play pivotal and influential public roles in government agencies, institutions of higher education, medical institutions, media organizations and so on. Thus, if anyone were to raise an ethical awareness about "keeping God's Earth" in those places, the attitude of

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<sup>12</sup> Christian Council Network Korea Newspaper, "좌파들의 정치선동 본격적으로 시작됐다 (It is Started in Earnest Political Instigation by Left-wing Groups)", (August 8, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology Experiences of the Korean Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 17-48.



Korean Christians toward their ecosystem could be significantly changed.

This leads me in turn to the conviction that it is necessary in the Korean context to study the eschatological visions of the New Testament in relation to today's environmental crisis. Not only does an inherited understanding of these eschatological visions shape Korean Christian perspectives on the future of the earth, but it also shapes these Christians' views of their responsibilities toward the environment.

Korean Christians have interpreted the biblical eschatological literature through the lens of Premillennial Dispensationalism that envisages a total destruction of nature, and this has played a pivotal role in building up their negative viewpoints toward the environment. However, as has often been noted in recent decades, it is difficult to find a positive and ecologically constructive view of the environment within the New Testament texts, because so many texts contain eschatological visions of cosmic catastrophe (e.g., Mk. 13:24-25; Heb. 12:25-29; 2 Pet. 3:5-13; Rev. 6:12-17). At first glance, these eschatological descriptions seem unlikely resources to inspire environmental ethics due to the predestined devastation of nature featured in them, even though these cosmic destructions are a part of a process whereby creation is transformed. On the other hand, as has also often been noted, there are eschatological New Testament texts, such as Rom. 8:19-23; and Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5, which illustrate human reconciliation with creation and cosmic peace through God's action in Christ. These texts inspire a more positive environmental ethics. Therefore, I would like to analyze these texts anew, writing explicitly out of a Korean context, in the hope of creating a new understanding of the environment for Korean Christians as well as for Christians all over the world.

## **0.2. Thesis Purpose and Aims: Rethinking Interpretations of the New Testament Eschatological Texts**

The primary purpose of this proposed research is to find a way to use the New Testament as a resource through which to ground Korean environmental ethics by focusing on selected eschatological visions of the New Testament, such as Rom. 8:19-23, and Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5. This thesis is a warning against the serious ecological destruction of South Korea, and an interrogation of the Korean Protestant Church's indifference toward contemporary environmental issues. Consequently, I ask the question, "who or what is the culprit that formed the apathy of Korean Christians on ecological issues?" To find an answer, the first and the second chapters of this thesis provide a brief history of the dissemination of Premillennial Dispensationalism and its theology and influence among Korean Christians. This entails examining the tremendous influence of certain brands of western theology brought by western missionaries from their home countries, especially those associated with biblical literalism and dispensationalism. Additionally, the first and the second chapters of this thesis will also aim to unveil the ecological shortcomings of Premillennial Dispensationalism. This will demonstrate the inherited understanding of eschatological texts in the New Testament given by the western missionaries to Korea: that is, that the natural world is destined to be totally destroyed by God's judgment and that devoted believers will be caught up in a new, transformed, and eternal existence.

In order to illustrate the common reading of New Testament eschatological texts on the part of Korean Christians, the third and fourth chapters of this thesis scrutinize the preferred eschatological texts of both the Korean Protestant Church and the North American Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly, 1

Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16 as interpreted through the lens of literalism and Premillennial Dispensationalism. 1 Thess. 4:13-18, especially verse 17, is the only New Testament text that mentions the so-called “rapture of a believer before the tribulation,” which Premillennial Dispensationalists consider a highly important concept: “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever (ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἄρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἔσόμεθα).” These biblical verses played a pivotal role in the view of biblical eschatology that emerged in some traditions of Christianity in the United States of America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Regarding this, N.T. Wright says:

...the second coming of Jesus Christ has become the favorite topic of a large swath of North American Christianity, particularly but not exclusively in the fundamentalist and dispensationalist segment. Growing out of some millenarian movements of the nineteenth century, particularly J. N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren, a belief has arisen, and taken hold of millions of minds and hearts, that we are now living in the end times, in which all the great prophecies are to be fulfilled at last. Central to these prophecies, it is believed, is the promise that Jesus will return in person, snatching the true believers away from this wicked world to be with him and then, after an interval of ungodliness, returning to reign over the world forever.<sup>14</sup>

Markus Bockmuehl summarizes the opinion of Tom Wright, pointing out the influence of these biblical texts and the concept of rapture and saying that these verses represent “a puzzling eschatological passage that since at least the nineteenth century has led certain literally minded interpreters to imagine a scenario of abduction

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<sup>14</sup> N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 118.

by extraterrestrial aliens – an idea that perhaps had its popular heyday in a late-twentieth-century series of well-known biblicistic sci-fi novels.”<sup>15</sup> Premillennial Dispensationalism “focuses Christian hope on the rescuing of the elect from a doomed earth, rather than (say) on the liberation and renewal of all creation,” based on 1 Thess. 4:13-18.<sup>16</sup> Thus, rereading and delineating 1 Thess. 4:13-18 contributes not only to understanding its potentially undesirable consequences for an environmental ethic, but also to how the rapture concept influenced the interpretation of these texts in Protestant churches in Korea.

Moreover, the fourth chapter of my thesis also addresses Rev. 6-16 through the lens of literalism and Premillennial Dispensationalism – how it is seen as a total destruction of the ecosystem. This will show the interpretive perspective of Premillennial Dispensationalism and how it affected not only the Korean Protestant Church but also Protestant churches around the world in terms of shaping Christian attitudes towards the environment and ecosystem.

Rev. 6-16 has an affinity with the images of cosmic catastrophe and imminent cataclysm. The catastrophic images in the Book of Revelation such as the destruction of rivers, water turning to blood, burning forests and grasslands, a great earthquake, and much else of this sort, inculcates a negative tendency in believers towards nature, namely, that the destruction of the present creation and ecosystems is an unavoidable event ordained by God.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the Book of Revelation has been used many times to justify environmental destruction. Luke T. Johnson remarks that the history of the

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Markus Bockmuehl, “Did St. Paul Go to Heaven When He Died?” in *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N.T. Wright*, ed. Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays (Downer Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 218. See, N. T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope*, 124-36, 169-71.

<sup>16</sup> David G. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2010), 16.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Adams, *“The Stars Will Fall from Heaven”: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and its World* (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2007), 236-39.

interpretation of Revelation is largely a story of tragic misinterpretation. He concludes that “few writings in all of literature have been so obsessively read with such generally disastrous results as the Book of Revelation.”<sup>18</sup>

In approaching these texts, I will use the model of biblical hermeneutics developed by Ernst Conradie and David Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate in order to show how the doctrinal lenses of Premillennial Dispensationalism, especially the idea of the Rapture prior to the tribulation, have shaped biblical interpretation among Protestant Korean Christians. More specifically, I illustrate how Korean Christians understand these eschatological texts in relation to nature and how Korean Christians’ pre-understanding of New Testament eschatological texts shapes thought and indifference towards nature. I argue that this pre-understanding of New Testament eschatological texts originated from the negative perspective of Premillennial Dispensationalism towards nature, and the escape from the earth by Rapture prior to the tribulation, which leads Korean Christians to read or to interpret these biblical texts in a sense that is congruent with the viewpoints of Premillennial Dispensationalism. This interpretive tradition and pre-understanding of New Testament eschatological texts has deeply permeated the theological thought and perception of Korean Christians towards nature. Such an abiding tendency of interpretation of the eschatological texts in the New Testament shapes Korean Christians’ attitude and indifference towards contemporary environmental issues today. Thus, in order to challenge the common reading of New Testament eschatological texts through certain doctrinal lenses of literalism and Premillennial Dispensationalism, I will present the possibility of a new way of interpreting these two

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<sup>18</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 573.

eschatological texts, 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16, and develop alternative ways of understanding these texts. Models for the kinds of interpretations I intend to develop are provided by such scholars as N.T Wright, Barbara R. Rossing, Stephen Moore, Richard Bauckham, Steven Bouma-Prediger, Duncan Reid, and Edward Adams.

The fifth and sixth chapters of this thesis deal with eschatological texts in the New Testament that illustrate future hope for creation and restoration of nature, particularly Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5. In church history, the letter to the Romans played a pivotal role in emergent Protestant theology. Martin Luther, the father of reformed theology, experienced a strong change in his theology, especially in terms of soteriology, and Romans was central to this rethinking. His salvation theology of justification by faith alone, not by deed, came from his exegetical work on the letter of the Romans. The majority of New Testament scholars also have focused on the topic of the salvation of human beings when they interpret Romans. Thus, focusing on the destiny of non-human creatures in Romans (and specifically in its eschatology) might seem to be a tangential matter. Paul, at first glance, seems to have had no eschatological concern for non-human creatures, his entire focus being instead on human beings. In more recent decades however, scholars have developed hermeneutical possibilities and doctrinal constructs for studying the letter to the Romans from an ecological perspective, taking into account the environmental situation which faces the world. Writers on eco-theology who emerged in the early 1970s likewise asserted that the word *κτίσις* embraces all creation. In general, most eco-theological scholars cite Romans 8 as evidence to show the positive future of the entire ecosystem as well as to encourage concern for positive action on today's

environmental issues.<sup>19</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate state that this particular eschatological text depicts the future fulfillment of Paul's eschatological hope for Humanity's liberation from the bondage to decay as well as for the entirety of creation.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is probably the most frequently cited biblical text in support of positive environmental action.<sup>21</sup> In other words, scholars argue that in Rom. 8:19-23 Paul suggests some significant concepts for New Testament eschatology, such as that salvation not only includes all creation but also that the eschatological vision of Rom. 8:19-23 illustrates the eschatological future hope: reconciliation of *all* creation (κτίσις).<sup>22</sup> Dealing with this text is therefore highly significant for an understanding of New Testament eschatology (and Christian eschatological hope) in relation to human beings, the environment, and the earth. I hope that such a reading may serve to shape and develop environmental ethics for Korean Christians as well as for Christians around the world.

Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5 express another influential eschatological vision within the New Testament. The New Jerusalem in these texts may be argued to present a positive ecological vision and has been a major resource for eco-theological

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<sup>19</sup> Brendan Byrne, SJ, "Creation Groaning: An Earth Bible Reading of Romans 8.18-22", in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* ed. Norman C. Habel and Vicky Balabanski (Cleveland, Ohio, the Pilgrim Press, 2000), 193-203; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 248-63; David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 63-85; Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 92-115.

<sup>20</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 64-65.

<sup>21</sup> See further Cheryl Hunt, David G. Horrell, and Christopher Southgate, 'An Environmental Mantra? Ecological Interest in Romans 8.19-23 and a Modest Proposal for its Narrative Interpretation', *Journal of Theological Studies* 59 (2008): 546-79.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2000), 174-86; Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 16; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God Book II* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 1473-1519; Mark Goodacre, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology: Narrative Readings in Romans* (New York and London: T&T International, 2010), 36-39.

interpreters of the Book.<sup>23</sup> The story of the eschatological vision of the New Jerusalem begins in Rev. 21:1 and extends to 22:5. The background of the New Jerusalem is to be found in various Hebrew Bible texts, such as Gen. 1-3, Isa. 35:5-7; 65-66, Ezek. 40-47, Zech. 14:8-11, and Joel 3:18.<sup>24</sup> The important point of this eschatological vision is that it is an earth-centered vision. Contrary to contemporary popular apocalyptic thought, epitomized by Premillennial Dispensationalism which asserts that faithful believers shall be “raptured” at the end of the world in order to meet and live with God, the New Jerusalem vision of the Book of Revelation does not show us the image of rapture. Instead, the New Jerusalem is where God comes down to earth from heaven. It shows us that the eschatological dwelling place of God is on earth and not on another planet or in a spiritual realm.<sup>25</sup>

Another important point of the New Jerusalem vision is a symbiotic relationship of interdependence between the earth and its inhabitants.<sup>26</sup> The river of life in the vision of New Jerusalem can be seen in Rev. 22:1. In the middle of the New Jerusalem flows the river of life with the tree of life on either side. This river of life gives life to everything it touches while it flows. The tree of life is a significant, powerful

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Bauckham, *New Testament Theology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 126-43; Barbara R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004), 147-71; G.K Beale, *The Book of Revelation: The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 1039-1121; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 522-68; O. Maier, “There’s a New World Coming! Reading the Apocalypse in the Shadow of the Canadian Rockies”, in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Vicky Balabanski (New York, NY: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 166-79; David E. Aune, *Word Bible Commentary 52c Revelation 17-22* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 1998), 1078-194; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2014), 793-810; Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* (New York & Cambridge: The University of Cambridge, 2003), 241-227.

<sup>24</sup> G.K Beale, *The Book of Revelation: The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 1043-46; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 561.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, 148; Duncan Reid, “Setting Aside the Ladder to Heaven: Revelation 21.1-22.5 from the Perspective of the Earth”, in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Cleveland, Ohio: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 239.

<sup>26</sup> Maier, “There’s New World Coming!”, 175-77.



image. The leaves on this tree function as medicine: “τὰ φύλλα τοῦ ξύλου εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν (the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations)” (Rev. 22:2). Regardless of spiritual or physical wounds, God’s will is to heal the world. Interestingly, the actual healing power comes not directly from God but from the leaves of the tree of life. This provokes us to rethink the relationship between human beings and nature. Human beings can not only survive through eating the fruits of the tree of life but also obtain therapy through its leaves. Thus, this image of the tree of life suggests that human beings rely on the ecosystem, that they are an intrinsic part of earth’s community, and that they should live together with nature in symbiosis. We cannot survive without the help of our neighbors, and that reliance extends to nature itself. Humanity is a part of the earth, nothing more and nothing less. I thus contend that Revelation’s vision of the New Jerusalem, newly interpreted from an ecological perspective, may inspire Christians to live in fulfillment of God’s eschatological purpose of ecological renewal by radically rethinking their relationship with nature and taking care of the ecosystem. On the whole, two biblical texts, 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16, are among the most influential of those that can be understood as implying a pessimistic or indifferent position towards the environment, but Rom. 8:19-25; Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5 present “a non-destructive (yet radical) transformation of existing creation” that may provide the basis for the development of an environmental ethic.<sup>27</sup> I will therefore analyze and re-read these biblical texts, taking into account the relationship between human beings and rest of creation.

Overall, this research will address the following questions, with the contemporary South Korean context in view: How has the tradition of interpreting New

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<sup>27</sup> Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven*, 256.

Testament eschatology introduced to Korea, and the central texts within that tradition (1 Thess: 4.17 and Rev 6-16) shaped Korean Protestant Christians' understanding of the future of the earth and of their responsibilities towards the environment? How might this tradition of interpretation be challenged and reconfigured through an ecologically informed reading of other New Testament eschatological texts: Rom. 8:19-25; Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5? How do these texts, viewed through the lens of an ecological hermeneutic, portray God's plan for the world in terms of humans, animals, and the environment? In both cases the choice of texts (explained further in chapters below) is selective, due to limitations of space and time, and focuses on key examples for both approaches to interpretation. Other texts, notably Col. 1:15-20 might also have been chosen as a focus for ecological reading, but Rom 8:19-23 is the most obvious Pauline text to choose, and given the prominence of the book of Revelation within the tradition of interpretation I wish to challenge, it makes sense to include a text from this book of the NT.

I therefore demonstrate in this study the ways in which doctrinal lenses (explained below) in both Premillennial Dispensationalism and ecological hermeneutics play a pivotal role in interpreting biblical texts, in particular in the New Testament eschatological texts. My aim is to thereby lead to a more productive and ecologically fruitful understanding of the eschatological vision of the New Testament and to reconfigure the interpretive tradition of Korean Protestantism of the New Testament eschatological texts. I hope that this will draw greater attention to and further enhance environmental ethics, for Korean Protestantism as well as for Christians around world.

### 0.3. A Brief History of the Research Topic

After Rachel Carson's warning of the negative impact of human activity towards nature given in her hugely influential book, *Silent Spring*, in 1962, awareness of environmental issues was kindled in various disciplines.<sup>28</sup> In 1967, Lynn White Jr, the medieval historian, addressed the causes of the contemporary environmental crisis in his short article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis". Interestingly enough, in this article he blamed Christianity, arguing that the culprit of the current environmental crisis is the worldview of western Christianity.<sup>29</sup> He mentioned that "in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen."<sup>30</sup> He especially emphasized that the western Christian tradition shaped a dualistic viewpoint in terms of the relationship between human beings and nature, and even claimed that the western Christian tradition considered that the exploitation of nature for human benefit or interests is God's will. He concluded that "Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects."<sup>31</sup> His provocative thesis about Christianity's impact stimulated certain kinds of theological and biblical reflection or studies on the environment, which can be categorized in two different ways: resistance of the ecological agenda, and recovery of ecological wisdom in the Bible.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London and New York: Penguin Classics edn., 1962).

<sup>29</sup> Lynn White Jr, "The Historical Roots", *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-207.

<sup>30</sup> White, "The Historical Roots", 1205.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 21-32.

### **0.3.1. Two Reading Strategies of the Bible: Reading for Resistance of the Ecological Agenda or Reading for the Recovery of Ecological Wisdom in the Bible.**

The resistance strategy is found in some evangelical and fundamentalist groups, particularly in the United States of America. This camp seems to not only prioritize non-negotiable authority of the Bible but also to exclude the pressures of the contemporary social, cultural, and political context regarding environmental issues. Adherents of this stance regard any environmental movements as falling under the influence of the New Age movement. They may even consider ecological awareness to be a form of a mask of satanic tyranny.<sup>33</sup> Although some people in this group, like Calvin E. Beisner, acknowledge the importance of the protection of the environment, they deny the reality of today's environmental crisis. Instead, they believe that economic development and the increase of levels of consumption are the best means for enhancing both people's wealth and environments.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that people's understanding of New Testament eschatology or Christian eschatological hope has a pivotal role in shaping Christian views on the environment, particularly in the form of Premillennial Dispensationalism, which remains popular in the USA. In this theological viewpoint, the ecosystem's predicament is the sign of the impending end of the earth. This means both the Parousia of Christ and the rescue of faithful believers, because Premillennial Dispensationalism not only asserts the Rapture of

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<sup>33</sup> Loren Wilkinson, "New Age, New Consciousness, and the New Creation," in *Tending the Garden: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth*, ed. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 24-25; Constance E. Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1983), 162-69.

<sup>34</sup> Calvin E. Beisner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Action Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty/Eerdmans, 1997), 107-25.

devoted Christians before the tribulation, but also illustrates the appropriateness of natural disasters prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup> We can see this kind of perspective discussed in a book, entitled *Guardians of Creation: Nature in theology and the Christian life*, written by Lawrence Osborn. In this book, Osborn introduced a reaction of the adherents of Premillennial Dispensationalism to the environmental crisis as follows:

The conservative reaction is to look at Green philosophy and spirituality, recognize its affinities with paganism and then dismiss the whole environmentalist agenda as a front for neo-paganism. In its most extreme pre-millennial forms this reaction actually celebrates the environmental crisis as one more piece of evidence that the End is nigh.<sup>36</sup>

Another perspective is to find a positive view of the Bible and the Christian tradition concerning the environment. In fact, even though White criticized the human-centered viewpoint of the western Christian tradition, he did not deny that there are positive models for eco-theology in the Christian tradition, notably Francis of Assisi.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in some cases, biblical scholars have tried to retrieve ecological wisdom from the Christian tradition by focusing on some favourite biblical texts such as, Gen. 1-2; Job. 37-39; Isa. 9-11; Mt. 6.28-30; Rom. 8.18-23; Col. 1.15-20; and Rev. 21-22.<sup>38</sup> Key figures and projects in such research includes Richard Bauckham.<sup>39</sup> However, as

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<sup>35</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British & American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 59-80.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in theology and the Christian Life* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), 61.

<sup>37</sup> White, "The Historical Roots", 1207.

<sup>38</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, "What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics? Some Broad Parameters", in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 295.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives*

Horrell rightly pointed out, the approaches represented by Bauckham have certain weaknesses. For example, Bauckham's conclusion seems to be that all biblical texts contain an ecologically friendly message if we remove the interpretive distortion of earlier misinterpretations of the Bible. Bauckham argues as follows:

Of course, biblical interpretation never takes place in a cultural vacuum, and often it is a cultural transition that makes it possible to recognise, with hindsight, the mistakes that previous interpreters made. The more holistic, integrated and ecological view of the world that has become available to us in recent decades (which is not to say that it has triumphed over the modern dichotomy of nature and history) helps us to read the Bible differently. It becomes clear that the Bible's meta-narrative assumes that humans live in mutuality with the natural world, not domination, and especially not with the aim of emancipation from nature, but in complex mutuality.<sup>40</sup>

Horrell criticizes his argument however:

What I think Bauckham fails on the whole explicitly to acknowledge (let alone discuss) is the extent to which the ecological reading of the Bible he presents is not only made possible by a contemporary ecological worldview but is also a *product* of that worldview, a construction made in the creative interplay between ancient text and contemporary perspective. There is no discussion of hermeneutical method, no reflection on what kind of interpretative activity is going on when we "rediscover" ecological wisdom suitable for the twenty-first century in the texts of the Bible.<sup>41</sup>

By contrast, the Earth Bible project, initiated by Norman Habel, approaches the biblical texts from the standpoint of the Earth. The basic premise of this project is that an anthropocentric bias in biblical texts – written by human beings and for humans'

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(Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011); *The Bible and Ecology* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 150; David G. Horrell, "Ecological Hermeneutics: Reflections on Methods and Prospects for the Future", *Colloquium* 46/2 (2014): 146.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 146-47.

benefit – and anthropocentric, patriarchal, and androcentric views of interpreters have induced distortion in the understanding of biblical texts which leads us to exploit and oppress the Earth community. According to this project, not only is the human species a member of the Earth community, but the Earth also exists as a subject (not a topic) in the biblical texts. This project attempts to retrieve the biblical texts' ecological wisdom and to hear the voice of the Earth itself in biblical texts.<sup>42</sup> The approach of the Earth Bible project has three steps in interpretation of the biblical texts: suspicion, identification, and retrieval. The first step is suspicion. In this step, interpreters consider that the biblical texts, written by human authors, ultimately concern the relationship between God and human beings. In other words, the biblical texts have an inherently anthropocentric perspective. This means that not only have biblical texts originated from humans (anthropogenic), but also that the human being is located as their central theme (anthropocentric). It distinguishes a totally different, hierarchical order such as God, human beings, and the rest of creation. The second step (identification) is "to reread the text to discern where Earth or members of Earth community may have suffered, resisted, or been excluded by attitudes within the text or the history of its interpretation."<sup>43</sup> The third step is retrieval. In this step, interpreters discover that there are considerable stories about nonhuman species in the biblical texts by discerning the voice of the Earth and considering the Earth as the narrator of the biblical story. In other words, this step attempts to find alternative traditions which place the Earth at the centre of the biblical story in the Bible.<sup>44</sup> There are five edited volumes of essays in the Earth Bible series, and an ongoing commentary series of the

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<sup>42</sup> Habel, "Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics", 1.

<sup>43</sup> The Earth Bible Team, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles", in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* ed. Norman C. Habel (The Earth Bible, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>44</sup> Habel, "Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics", 5.

Earth Bible Project.<sup>45</sup> These book series propose ecological readings of biblical texts through the lens or the voice of the Earth. On this basis, the Earth Bible team built the six guiding ecojustice principles in order to help interpretation of the biblical texts as follows:

1. The Principle of Intrinsic Worth: the universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.
2. The Principle of Interconnectedness: Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
3. The Principle of Voice: Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.
4. The Principle of Purpose: The universe, Earth, and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design.
5. The Principle of Mutual Custodianship: Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners, rather than rulers, to sustain a balanced and diverse Earth community.
6. The Principle of Resistance: Earth and its components not only suffer from injustices at the hands of humans, but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The five edited volumes of essays and the ongoing series of the Earth Bible Commentaries that continued until 2016 are as follows: Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst, eds., *The Earth Story in Genesis* (The Earth Bible, 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst, eds., *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions* (The Earth Bible, 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Norman C. Habel, ed., *The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets* (The Earth Bible, 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Norman C. Habel and Vicky Balabanski eds., *The Earth Story in the New Testament* (The Earth Bible, 5; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Norman C. Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11* (The Earth Bible Commentary, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011); Michael Trainor, *About Earth's Child: An Ecological Listening to the Gospel of Luke* (The Earth Bible Commentary, 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012); Raymond F. Person Jr, *Deuteronomy and Environmental Amnesia* (The Earth Bible Commentary, 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014); Norman C. Habel, *Finding Wisdom in Nature: An Eco-Wisdom Reading of the Book of Job* (The Earth Bible Commentary, 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014); Anthony Rees, *Voices of the Wilderness: An Ecological Reading of the Book of Numbers* (The Earth Bible Commentary, 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015); Sigve, K. Tonstad, *The Letter to the Romans: Paul among the Ecologists* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> The Earth Bible Team, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles", in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, 24; David G. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*, 13-14; Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis*, 41. Ernst Conradie also illustrated the function of the six ecojustice principles of the Earth Bible project as doctrinal keys. See Ernst M. Conradie, "What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics?", 429-41.



These six ecojustice principles play a pivotal role in encapsulating ecological values and providing a basis for critical engagement with biblical texts in terms of non-human beings. Interestingly enough, the Earth Bible project did not employ specific Christian terms such as ‘God’ and ‘creation’ when it built up the six principles. Instead, it formulated non-theological language, because this could facilitate the conversation with other disciplines and various traditions such as science, biology, ecology, Buddhism, and other religions.<sup>47</sup>

However, Horrell points out a shortcoming of these ecological principles as presented by the Earth Bible team, saying that although the Earth Bible team outlined “a critical and constructive hermeneutical process” (i.e. the six ecojustice principles) for proper interpretation of the Bible, it “failed to speak faithfully in the language of the Christian tradition.”<sup>48</sup> The Earth Bible team applied not theological languages but generic languages in order to bring forth to readers a more mutual understanding of this approach. However, this method results in a failure “to give the Bible any *formative* role in the construction of ecojustice principles – something that would be essential for the generation of an authentically and distinctively Christian form of ecological commitment, which would, furthermore, have to be formulated in (Christian) theological language.”<sup>49</sup> Horrell’s criticism towards two biblical scholars’ methods, Bauckham and Habel is, I think, reasonable for avoiding both a naïve interpretation of the Bible and an abandonment of Christian tradition or its languages. Thus, I will use

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Ernst M. Conradie, “Interpreting the Bible amidst Ecological Degradation,” *Theology* 112 (2009): 199-207. See also Ernst M. Conradie, “The Road towards an Ecological Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics,” *Scriptura* 93 (2006): 305-14.

<sup>47</sup> Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics,” 153; The Earth Bible Team, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles”, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics,” 153, 154.

<sup>49</sup> Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics,” 156.

Horrell and Conradie's approaches introduced below as my reading strategy for dealing with eschatological texts of the New Testament.

## **0.4. Methodology**

### **0.4.1. Uncertainty and Ambivalence of the Biblical Texts**

When we read and interpret biblical texts, we sometimes have a sense of ambivalence, because the biblical texts do not maintain consistent positions and perspectives on certain theological questions. Some texts advocate a particular viewpoint on a certain theological query, others support a seemingly contrary viewpoint. For example, in terms of the eschatological visions of the New Testament, some biblical texts seem to illustrate cosmic catastrophe or the destruction of nature at the end of the world (Mk. 13:24-27; 2 Pet. 3:1-13; Rev. 8:1-13). However, other biblical passages appear to depict a future hope for all created things, or a reconciliation of all creation in God's Day of Judgment (Rom. 8:19-25; Rev. 21-22). Such ambivalent and uncertain implications of the biblical texts for the eschatological vision of the New Testament concerning the environment and the earth's future imply significant and difficult questions in terms of the function and influence of the biblical texts in shaping Christian thought and behaviour towards nature. It may raise questions such as what kind of interpretation or reading of the Bible is appropriate, and what is the exact meaning and implication of the various biblical texts. As a matter of fact, such indefinite and uncertain positions of the biblical texts, in terms of the future vision of nature, not only could foster a negative point of view towards nature, but could also lead Christians to indifference regarding their ethical response towards the environment.

The biblical texts have diverse possibilities of interpretation. There is no such thing as reading the Bible neutrally. In fact, there is significant historical, economic, social, political, and cultural distance between the ancient world's contexts in which the biblical texts were written and the contemporary world's contexts in which we now live.<sup>50</sup> Thus, today's readers should recognize these different contexts when they read and interpret the biblical texts.

#### **0.4.2. The Importance of Context in Interpreting the Bible**

In this methodological section, I would like to address the presuppositions that I inevitably hold – for the context in which interpreters read biblical texts plays a pivotal role in their interpretations.<sup>51</sup> Horrell stresses the importance of context in biblical studies. He claims that “Biblical studies has always been shaped by, responsive to, and enmeshed in, issues and priorities in the contemporary context, even when it operates in a primarily historical or archaeological mode and does not acknowledge such contemporary influences on the questions and approaches it pursues.”<sup>52</sup> In addition, Conradie mentions the significance of contemporary contexts in a different way, stating “interpretation is a form of praxis, a way of continuously re-appropriating and responding to the significance of signs in everyday life.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, it is important that one considers one's own contemporary agenda and social setting as an important task in constructing an interpretation of the biblical texts.

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<sup>50</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, *Angling for Interpretation: A First Introduction to Biblical, Theological and Contextual Hermeneutics* (Stellenbosch, S.A: Sun Press, 2008), 12-26.

<sup>51</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, “What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics?” 298-99.

<sup>52</sup> David G. Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics: Reflections on Methods and Prospects for the Future,” *Colloquium* 46/2 2014: 139.

<sup>53</sup> Conradie, “What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics?” 298.

### 0.4.3. The Current Ecological Context

Based on these considerations regarding the importance of one's contemporary context, it is necessary to read the biblical texts taking into account contemporary environmental issues, especially as interest in caring for the environment has skyrocketed due to the worldwide impact of the ecological predicament. Numerous environmental issues are gaining increasing attention in political debates around the world, including the extinction of endangered fishes and animals, shortage of natural resources, pollution, global warming, climate change, and so on.<sup>54</sup> According to James B. Martin-Schramm & Robert L. Stivers, the current ecological predicament was caused by five major factors:

Environmental degradation is a product of five interrelated causes: (1) too many people, (2) some of whom are consuming too much, (3) using powerful technologies that frequently damage nature's ecosystems, (4) supported by economic and political systems that permit and even encourage degradation, and (5) informed by anthropocentric attitudes toward nature.<sup>55</sup>

The total population of the world is currently approximately 7.4 billion, and the growth rate of the world's population is around 1.3 percent per year.<sup>56</sup> According to the United Nations projections, the total inhabitants of earth will reach nine billion by 2050.<sup>57</sup> Such figures mean that our planet is placing a huge demand on natural

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<sup>54</sup> For more information, see Michael S. Northcott, *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (London and MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2014), 1-12.

<sup>55</sup> James B. Martin-Schramm Robert L. Stivers, *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Method Approach* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 10; Cited at second hand from David G. Horrell, *The Bible and The Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2010), 5.

<sup>56</sup> Martin-Schramm and Stivers, *Christian Environmental Ethics*, 10.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 10, 11.

resources for supporting its population.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, the level of demand on the earth's resources will tend to increase as time goes on, because the nature of modern capitalism has the tendency to propel consumption in order to generate economic growth across the countries of the world.<sup>59</sup>

#### **0.4.4. Ernst M. Conradie, David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt and Christopher Southgate's Hermeneutical Approaches**

Considering these contexts of ecological predicaments, which all human beings in the world are facing, I believe that it is necessary to develop an ecological hermeneutic which provides new and different ways of reading the biblical texts, taking into account the contemporary contexts and issues that we are facing. In order to do that, this thesis borrows the ecological hermeneutics of four particular scholars: David G. Horrell and his group, and Ernst M. Conradie. Actually, Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate adapt Conradie's "self-consciously constructive and creative approach"<sup>60</sup> in his own approach – developed with Cherryl Hunt and Christopher Southgate in "A Narrative Eco-theology" – when he interprets Paul's letters (Romans 8:19-23 and Colossians 1:15-20).<sup>61</sup> The important point in Conradie's approach is that "Interpretation can only take place when some analogies, that is, similarities-amidst-differences, are identified, in the case of theological interpretation between the Biblical texts, the Christian tradition and a contemporary context."<sup>62</sup> However, biblical interpretation does not

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<sup>58</sup> Hugh Montefiore, "Why Aren't More Church People Interested in the Environment?", in *A Christian Approach to the Environment* by The John Ray Initiative (London: Guilders Graphics Ltd, 2005), 8-12.

<sup>59</sup> Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott, "Introduction", in *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, ed. Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 1-12; Martin-Schramm and Stivers, *Christian Environmental Ethics*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, "Introduction", in *Greening Paul*, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Horrell, *Greening Paul*, 49-59.

<sup>62</sup> Conradie, "What are interpretative strategies?", *Scriptura* 78 (2001): 436; David W. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (London: SCM Press), 1998,

merely reach immediately from the text to the context. The identification of such similarities and differences for biblical interpretation is a time consuming process that needs to take account of the trajectories of the particular biblical interpretative tradition. This is because the identification of the two factors (similarity and difference) is the product of an extremely complex reciprocal action between the effective history (Wirkungsgeschichte) of the Bible and specific Christian traditions and multiplex constituents in the contemporary context.<sup>63</sup> Conradie coined the notion of a so-called “spiral of interpretation”, which describes an act of complex interplay between these three key factors (biblical text, specific Christian tradition of interpretation, and contemporary context) when an interpreter investigates and interprets certain biblical texts.<sup>64</sup> He introduces the seven factors, or dimensions, which play a pivotal role in the interpretive process of the Bible in his quest for relative adequacy in biblical interpretation, as follows:

A. The world-behind-the-text (the complex history of the production of the text and the socio-historical and the rhetorical contexts within which that took place). B. The world-of-the-text (various literary features of a text, its co-text and its rhetorical thrust as reflected in the text itself). C. The world-in-front-of-the-text (traditions of interpretation created by the text, including the confessional traditions, their liturgies, creeds, confessions and practices). D. The act of interpretation and re-appropriation itself. E. The rhetorical thrust of the act of interpretation and appropriation (within contemporary interpretative communities, an interpretative culture). F. The contemporary context (societal challenges, changing circumstances). G. The world ‘below’ interpretation (interpretative interests and sub-conscious ideological distortions that influence each of the other aspects).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Conradie, “What are interpretative strategies?": 432.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 429, 433.

<sup>65</sup> Conradie, “What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics?” 299. For more detailed explanation of the ongoing process of interpretation of the Bible, see Conradie, *Angling for Interpretation*, 53-106.

This means that the process of interpretation is an ongoing conversation that aims to negotiate between the biblical text and the contemporary context in order to appropriate the biblical text in a way that is relevant today.<sup>66</sup> Daniel Patte distinguishes the differences between legitimate interpretation and validity as one factor that determines successful communication between the biblical text and context. According to his argument, a legitimate interpretation can be considered as an interpretation which is based on actual dimensions of the biblical text. But also, the validity of an interpretation signifies an interpretation that is shaped by the social setting in which the interpretation takes place, such as particular theological, social, economic, political, and cultural situations. This implies that various different interpretations of the biblical text can be legitimate depending on proofs of relevance in one's own contemporary contexts.<sup>67</sup> The more interplay we have, the more a comprehensive framework for biblical interpretation tradition is formed.

In this regard, any new experiences of and new points of view on the biblical text generated by such interplay produces a pre-understanding of the biblical texts. What this suggests is that biblical interpretation is a spiral of ongoing interpretation, not a work to derive only one genuine meaning in a certain text. It is constructive work "shaped and influenced by the text, by the modern context, and by the various traditions of reading and interpreting represented in (and beyond) Christian theology."<sup>68</sup> "Spiral of interpretation" describes the way in which the meaning, significance, value, use, or relevance of biblical texts is appropriated in and for ever-changing contemporary contexts. Thus, if contexts and demands are changed, this

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<sup>66</sup> Conradie, "What on Earth is an Ecological Hermeneutics?", 298-301.

<sup>67</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, "Determining Relative Adequacy in Biblical Interpretation", *Scriptura* 78 (2001): 448-55, especially, 449, 451-52.

<sup>68</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 122.

shapes a new perspective and viewpoint on biblical texts.

In this regard, I think it is important to note how “heuristic keys” play a pivotal role in the process of interpretation. Conradie defines heuristic keys as follows:

Heuristic keys are typically based on the dominant beliefs, doctrines, values, customs, and habits of interpretive communities. They are not directly derived from either the Biblical texts or the contemporary world but are precisely the product of previous attempts to construct a relationship between text, tradition and context.<sup>69</sup>

As a matter of fact, because heuristic keys usually correspond with some of the mainstream theological themes, thought, ideas, and doctrines within a particular context with particular pressing priorities, I suggest, as Conradie, Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate propose, that it can be helpful to specify such heuristic keys as doctrinal constructs.<sup>70</sup> Such doctrinal constructs play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining an interpretive tradition by continually repeated practices and habituation. If I borrow Horrell’s phrase, doctrinal constructs form a kind of “two-way lens, which shapes and focuses the biblical traditions – bringing certain themes into clear and central focus, blurring, distorting, or marginalizing others – and at the same time both reflects and shapes our understanding of, and response to, the contemporary context.”<sup>71</sup>

There are many examples which illustrate something of how such doctrinal constructs exert an influence on the history of biblical interpretation and understandings of the biblical texts. One example is Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430). For him, the central message of the biblical texts was Jesus’s teaching in Mark 12:28-34 – that is, love both your neighbour and God. This was the idea that dominated his

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<sup>69</sup> Conradie, “What are interpretative strategies?”, *Scriptura* 78 (2001): 436.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 122.



thinking when he interpreted the biblical texts. This means that it served as a doctrinal construct (a guiding principle for interpretation) and a dominant lens in reading and interpreting the biblical texts. He argued that full understanding of the biblical texts depends on interpreting the scriptures in the sense of Jesus's command to love God and neighbour as follows: "So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them".<sup>72</sup>

Another example is Martin Luther (1483-1546), one of the most important figures in Protestant history. His main doctrinal construct in reading the biblical texts, especially the Pauline corpus of letters (mainly Romans and Galatians), is "justification by faith." As a monk of the Catholic Church, Luther received instruction from the Church that all people were required to undertake a demanding process of ascetic practices in order to be forgiven their sins. However, it was in this socio-religious context that Luther developed the significant Christian doctrine of justification by faith from the scriptures. This doctrinal construct (justification by faith) became an important exegetical lens in interpreting and reading the Bible in the Lutheran tradition (a tradition of interpretation that has been ongoing). After that, this doctrinal construct not only continually functioned as the central key in the Lutheran tradition, but it also treated certain parts of biblical texts as central (Romans and Galatians) and marginalized others (such as the letter of James).<sup>73</sup> As a matter of fact, Luther questioned the status of the letter of James in the canon, not only because it appeared to contradict Luther's doctrinal construct of justification by faith, but also

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<sup>72</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.35.40, trans. and ed. R.P. H. Gree, *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27.

<sup>73</sup> Horrell, *the Bible and the Environment*, 123; Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 41.

because it did not show the important theological themes such as the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, compared with Pauline letters, the letter of James was undervalued and considered to be a more marginal text. Moreover, such orientation towards interpretation of the Bible (focusing on justification by faith) was continued by interpreters of the Lutheran tradition.

Recent theological movements beginning in the early 1970s, such as Theology of Liberation, Feminist Theology, and Min Jung Theology, also originated in specific socio-political contexts, namely, poverty in Latin America, violent oppression towards women by men, and the quest for social and political justice for people in South Korea.<sup>75</sup> These contexts have served as tools through which to shape certain doctrinal constructs for reading and interpreting the Bible through particular hermeneutical lenses such as liberation from poverty, or liberation from violent oppression from others or political power.<sup>76</sup> These doctrinal constructs open a door to rereading the biblical texts and rethinking the interpretive tradition of the Bible positively, creatively, and critically.

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<sup>74</sup> Andrew N. Chester and Ralph P. Martin, *The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter and Jude* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>75</sup> Jae-Soon Park, "Seed, Metaphor of Minjung: Minjung Theology from Perspective of Ecology and Spirituality," *Madang* 1, no. 2 (December 2004): 45-65. For more information on Minjung Theology, see Yeong Mee Lee, "A Political Reception of the Bible: Korean Minjung Theological Interpretation of the Bible", *SBL Forum*, n.p. (cited Oct 2005). Available online: <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=457> Last accessed 22 March 2018. It is clear from this latter essay that there are various points of contact between themes highlighted in the Minjung approach and the concerns of ecological hermeneutics: God as creator, understood through birthing metaphors, hopeful suffering, and salvation and creation as an ongoing process to create a new heaven and new earth in present reality. As an indigenous hermeneutic developed within the Korean context, Minjung hermeneutics could also contribute to the development of a uniquely Korean environmental ethic. However, in my own approach, I seek an approach which is more closely rooted within orthodox Christian theology, derived directly from the Bible and retaining a stance towards biblical authority compatible with Protestant doctrine.

<sup>76</sup> See Gerald O West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 21-46; Renita J. Weems, "Reading Her Way through the Struggle: African American Women and the Bible," in *The Bible and Liberation: political and social hermeneutics* ed. Norman K. Gottwald and Richard A. Horsley (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 31-50.

However, even though these doctrinal constructs could construct a new and relevant meaning in the interpretation of the biblical texts, they can also lead to an unavoidable distortion in understanding of both text and context. It is thus necessary that doctrinal constructs themselves be subjected to an ongoing process of critical testing of whether or not these doctrinal constructs function as mechanisms for adequate interpretation considering the text and the context. Without this hermeneutics of suspicion of doctrinal constructs, these doctrinal constructs lead to a distorting of the interpretation of the Bible. This is because this distorted interpretive tradition gives readers a pre-understanding or impression of the implications of biblical texts; there will be pervasive ideologies, seen through the lens of certain doctrinal constructs, which are already present and widespread among their users.<sup>77</sup> Conradie explains this in full as follows.

The word “ideology” may be used in two distinct ways. It is sometimes equated with the notion of “worldview” or “perspective” or point of view” ... The second use of the concept “ideology” refers to this sub-conscious justification of a position of power... The list of ideologies that often distort our interpretation of the Bible is well-known. It includes sexism, racism, classism, colonialism, Eurocentrism, anti-Semitism, imperialism, consumerism, elitism and anthropocentrism. In each case, a particular position of power is justified and entrenched. And this also distorts the interpretation of the Bible. The Bible is often used to justify the social, political or economic interests of a particular group. These ideologies often remain hidden. They are not always easy to detect. This is also the reason why they are so dangerous. They pave the way towards what Karl Marx has called “false consciousness” or what the German social scientist Jürgen Habermas has called “systematically distorted communication”. Sigmund Freud helped us to see how these ideologies can be suppressed within the sub-conscious and how we employ defense mechanisms in such a way that the truth remains hidden, also for ourselves.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, “The Road Towards an Ecological Biblical and Theological Hermeneutics”, 305-14, especially 308.

<sup>78</sup> Conradie, *Angling for Interpretation*, 27.

As shown above, not only do we need to be critical of or harbour suspicion towards our own trusted interpretation, doctrines, doctrinal constructs, traditions of interpretation, and the cultural assumptions of the world that we live in, but we should also consider our own interpretive methodology of the Bible to need ongoing reformulation.<sup>79</sup> Horrell points out three tasks – to be undertaken together, not sequentially - that are important for a proper approach to interpreting the Bible when considering current ecological questions. The first task is “*historical study and informed exegesis*.”<sup>80</sup> This is because this task enables us to recognize that the contents of the Bible are products of an ancient culture which were entirely different from our own culture in which we currently live. This point helps us to carefully understand and interpret the Bible. Secondly, “there is a need for interpretation to be informed by the *theological tradition*.”<sup>81</sup> In other words, the second task is to create dialogue between contemporary issues (such as ecological problems) and Christian interpretive tradition and ethics. This process considers “how Christian theology and ethics may be reshaped and rearticulated in the light of contemporary issues and demands.”<sup>82</sup> This task also needs to steer between conservative preservation of the Christian interpretive tradition and radical modification of it. Paul Santmire refers to those who apply this approach as revisionists. Revisionists occupy the position between conservative defenders and radical re-constructionists:

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 31-32. Conradie gives us several examples of what healthy suspicion is about. See in particular p.32.

<sup>80</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 125.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Since ... the Old and New Testaments are the font of the classical theological tradition in the West, and since these scriptures are taken as the chief norm for all teachers and teachings (*norma normans*) by the tradition itself, the revisionists, as a matter of course, also have given the highest priority to biblical interpretation. At the same time, however, the dynamics of the classical tradition, thus understood, constantly call forth a *re-forming* of the tradition itself, as that term itself has historically suggested.<sup>83</sup>

The third task is “an engagement with contemporary science and other fields of human knowledge (such as ethics) relevant to understanding the ecological issues that confront us.”<sup>84</sup> Of course, there are some controversial issues in terms of the validity of such interpretive approaches when modern scientific research reveals some facts and evidence to the contrary of the teaching of the Bible. Some would argue that Christians must follow the Biblical teaching instead of scientific opinion. However, I would like to insist on critically engaging in discussion with various fields and disciplines. This is because it is my position that theology should not be exclusive to other disciplines and areas of human knowledge such as ethics in science and the moral status of humans and animals. Discussion of this nature and focus would contribute to the critical engagement involved in the reading and understanding of the Bible within the Christian tradition.<sup>85</sup> Overall, Horrell, Hunt, Southgate and Conradie’s approach is a kind of interpretive approach to applying complex reciprocal knowledge in theology, through scrutinized exegesis or systematical-theological assessment of the biblical texts dealing with the perceived priorities of the contemporary context and of the science which gives us introspective knowledge in various other areas of study.

In this regard, the environmental hermeneutics of Horrell, Hunt, Southgate and

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<sup>83</sup> Paul E. Santmire, *Nature Reborn. The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 7-8.

<sup>84</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 126.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Conradie help to critically analyze the fact that despite people's claims to be simply reading and following what "the Bible says," different traditions and contexts lead to the formation of certain doctrinal constructs which emerge both from the reading of the Bible and from the particular context. Precisely one of the advantages of identifying these doctrinal constructs explicitly is that it makes it clear that we are not simply claiming to read or present what the text "says," but are acknowledging that our reading of the Bible is a construction, shaped by certain priorities and convictions. Horrell, Hunt, Southgate and Conradie's approaches suggest ways of understanding the interpretive mechanisms that result from a privileging of certain biblical texts, doctrinal constructs, and biblical texts.

In terms of the Korean Protestant context, Conradie, Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate's model manifestly enables me to scrutinize the origins of indifference of Korean Christians towards environmental issues, and the role that biblical interpretation plays in this. There is, for example, a plethora of texts in Scripture which convey eschatological visions. Notwithstanding this ample data, as we shall see in chapters 1-2, the theology of the early western missionaries to Korea pushed to the fore certain key doctrinal constructs (i.e. the Rapture, and the imminent and total destruction of nature) which found roots in certain texts and in turn made those texts highly influential and centralized them in offering an overall interpretation of the eschatological vision of the New Testament (see 1 Thess. 4: 13-18; Rev. 6:12-17; Mk. 13:24-25; Heb. 12:25-29; 2 Pet. 3:5-13 and so on). Other eschatological texts, such as Rom. 8:19-23, and Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5, which envision reconciliation of all creation, were marginalised. Moreover, the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism – such as Rapture before tribulation and total destruction of all

ecosystems at the end of the world – never suggest hope for the earth. Instead, these doctrinal constructs lead to a widespread sense of destructive eschatology, or despair concerning the future. They are not able to respond fruitfully to the current context that all human beings around the world are confronting: the ecological predicament of the earth. It is clear that without any positive eschatological vision of hope for ecosystems, the environment, and the earth itself, impetus for a Christian environmental ethic may be lost. It means we will confront serious difficulty in truly addressing the current predicament of earth's ecosystems.<sup>86</sup>

As has been outlined above, this thesis borrows the ecological hermeneutic of four non-Korean scholars: Ernst M. Conradie and David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate. Importing another western theological perspective might seem to carry a risk, in that it could repeat a similar 'colonial' process to that by which the early western missionaries brought their particular theological perspectives to Korea. In other words, to use another Western theological perspective, such as a hermeneutic derived from the Exeter project on uses of the Bible in environmental ethics, as a basis for a South Korean Christian eco-theological hermeneutics, might seem dubious in terms of its relevance to South Korea's particular context – a totally different context from that in which the 'Exeter' approach was developed.

However, I think the most important question is not that of the regional-ethnic origin (Western or Eastern) of the methodology, but the relevance of the methodology itself for ecological hermeneutics of the Bible. My intention in this thesis is not to criticize the early western missionaries to Korea but to uncover the negative effect of the eschatological concepts and ideas which they brought, contained within the

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<sup>86</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl, (London: SCM Press, 1996), xi-xvii.

doctrines of so-called premillennial dispensationalism. One of the main criticisms in this thesis concerns the ecologically-negative viewpoint of the eschatological ideas in premillennial dispensationalism such as rapture and total destruction of the earth and the negative impact of these concepts not only on Korean Christian understanding of the relationship between God, humanity, and the rest of creation, but also the indifference of Korean Christians towards environmental issues. In other words, the direct target of the criticisms is not the early western missionaries to Korea, but the lens and doctrinal constructs of the biblical eschatology that they had.

The reason that I intend to apply Conradie, Horrell, Hunt and Southgate's ecological hermeneutics is that this approach is very well-suited to addressing the Korean mainline Protestant church's problem in relation to social, 'this-worldly', issues, particularly the lack of engagement with environmental issues. In other words, Conradie, Horrell, Hunt and Southgate's ecological approach, particularly through its focus on the role of doctrinal constructs, is very effective not only for uncovering the origin of the Korean mainline church's indifference towards environmental issues and their understanding of nature, but also for reconfiguring South Korean Christians' interpretive tradition into a more eco-friendly engagement. Their approach can help both to show the function of doctrinal constructs and to illuminate the relationship between the biblical text, the Korean Christian context, and its interpretive tradition in relation to the understanding of nature and reading and interpreting the eschatological texts.

Although premillennial dispensationalists say that they support and follow biblical literalism when they interpret the biblical texts, a position based on a particular view of the Bible's authority, their reading of the biblical texts came not only from the



Bible itself, but also from certain preunderstandings, convictions, priorities, encapsulated in doctrinal constructs such as total destruction and rapture. These influences are enmeshed in complex reciprocal interpretive actions in relation to the text, interpretive tradition, and the context. Admittedly, the ecological approach on which I draw, developed in the Exeter project, may be taken to represent a more critical or liberal perspective on the Bible compared with a premillennial dispensational reading of the Bible. However, it can be adapted and used in a way suited to my Korean Protestant context, by focusing on the ways in which the biblical texts can be read just as positively as in the premillennialist dispensationalist tradition, but with different lenses, ideas and doctrinal constructs such as restoration of creation, earth-centered eschatological vision, and a symbiotic relationship of interdependence between human and the rest of creation. My intention is not to challenge to the authority of Scripture, the holy Bible, but to show how both kinds of approach to the Bible – premillennialist eschatology and ecological hermeneutics – shape their engagement with the Bible via different doctrinal constructs in relation to the environment. Neither approach is simply a ‘literal’ reading of the entire Bible, but both approaches prioritize and emphasize certain texts over others.

Moreover, in my point of view, Conradie, Horrell, Hunt and Southgate’s model offers a fruitful way to realize the importance of context. Lasting accentuation of the influence of contexts in biblical interpretation is, I think, not overemphasized, regardless of whether or not these contexts are political, economic, cultural, and so on. In this thesis, I would like to define this context in the broad sense that *all* humanity faces the ecological predicaments of the earth: climate change, globalization, and global capitalism. Humanity is living on the earth, no matter where

exactly. The risk of borrowing another western theology is that there may again be a non-Korean response to Korean issues. However, the environmental crisis is a global issue, not only a Korean issue, that requires people everywhere to consider a response to it, and that calls responsible Christians to consider how their traditions and scriptures can be re-read in better way. Another benefit of Conradie, Horrell, Hunt and Southgate's ecological hermeneutics is that "it gives a more honest insight into what theological and ethical engagement with the Bible involves."<sup>87</sup>

The ecological approach of Conradie, Horrell, Hunt and Southgate thus enables me to be explicit and reflective about the fact that I am shifting the focus in my biblical interpretation, changing both the key doctrinal constructs and the central texts in order to reconfigure the tradition in an ecological direction. Their approaches offer a way through which to analyse the influence of certain theologies of the interpretation of the Bible in the Korean context, and also suggest a method by which to constructively develop some new perspectives, again in a Korean context.

On the basis of these interpretive dimensions of biblical interpretation, not only do I propose new insights into the New Testament eschatological texts as a contribution to a contextual Korean Protestant Christian environmental ethic but also I offer to both Korean Protestant Christians *and* Christians around the world an alternative perspective towards the environment, through a more ecologically positive understanding of New Testament eschatology. Not only are there currently no comprehensive studies of the eschatological visions of the New Testament written with the South Korean environmental situation in mind, but also there are no scholars who

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<sup>87</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 124.

have specialized in an ecological approach to the Bible in Korea. This thesis will lay the groundwork for an ecological reading of the Bible in the Korean context. Moreover, this thesis and its further study on the ecological approach to the Bible will, I hope, be used as a resource of valuable information in the Korean forum, as well as for Christian believers who live in other parts of the earth – whether at schools, companies, environmental groups, governmental agencies, seminaries, or universities – specifically for informing conversation with various scholars, leaders, and school teachers concerning biblical viewpoints in environmental issues and ethics.

### **0.5. The Thesis Design**

There are three main questions that will recur throughout the thesis. These are: Who or what impacted the formation of the indifference of Korean Christians towards the ecological agenda? How can this be reconfigured into voluntary engagement with ecological issues today? What kinds of relationship between God, humanity and the rest of creation may be found in the eschatological visions of the New Testament?”

In chapter one, I address one of the questions within the context of the history of Korean Christianity. The purpose of this chapter is mainly to unveil the origins of the indifference of the Korean Protestant Church towards ecological issues. My analysis aims to demonstrate the Korean Church’s inherited understanding of the eschatological vision of the New Testament through certain theological orientations, especially Premillennial Dispensationalism, as propagated by early Western missionaries and early Korean Christian leaders and that continue to influence this theological orientation today. To be more specific, this chapter deals with the inauguration, development, and stagnation of Korean Christianity and the contribution of the Western missionaries to Korean society.

Chapter two mainly deals with the question of the influence of Premillennial Dispensationalism on Korean Protestantism from its introduction to its continuing influence. To be more specific, in order to understand this theological context, this chapter surveys the eschatological viewpoint of Premillennial Dispensationalism and its negative view point towards nature, such as the total destruction of the earth and the rapture of faithful believers at the end of Parousia. These two chapters help to understand the historical-cultural-political context of Korean Protestantism.

Chapter three places 1 Thess. 4:13-18 in direct conversation with its interpretive tradition within the history of Korean Protestantism, driven by a set of doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism: rapture and the imminent Parousia. The following chapter, chapter four, turns to the interpretative orientation of Korean Protestantism as developed through certain doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism found in chapters 6-16 in the Book of Revelation, such as the total destruction of the earth. These chapters also offer alternative readings of these two biblical texts and primarily aid us in understanding the theological-biblical context of Korean Protestantism.

Chapters five and six mostly consider the question concerning the relationship between God, humanity and the rest of creation as seen in Rom. 8:19-23 (in chapter five) and Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5 (in chapter six) through a set of eco-eschatological-doctrinal constructs of ecological hermeneutics (set out in chapter five) such as the earth centered New Jerusalem vision, the symbiotic relationship of creation, and the reconciliation of all creation. Furthermore, these two chapters address the question of the potential of eco-theological ideas for Korean Christian environmental ethics. These chapters not only enhance our understanding of the eschatological visions of the New

Testament, but they also inspire us to engage in the ecological agenda for the achievement of God's eschatological purpose of the reconciliation of creation.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SPREAD OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY IN KOREA**

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis applies Ernst Conradie's methodology, as developed by David Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate. According to their studies, recognizing social, economic, and political contexts is an important task when seeking to understand the interpretive tradition of reading the Bible. To give a general historical background, the biblical theology of Korea was, at first, heavily influenced by western theology, and especially by American missionary theology which at that time was dominated by Premillennial Dispensationalism. These western missionaries had a direct influence not only on the formation of Korean theology, but also on the development of education in Korea, and on the country's economy. That is why it is useful to consider a short history of the influence of western missionaries and their theology upon the Korean mainline Church. Thus, in order to properly deal with this history, context, and influence, this, the first chapter of the thesis, examines the main features of the stages of church and theological development in Korea. The chapter first expounds a short history of Christianity in Korea, from the 1770s to the 2000s. This includes a particular focus on the interrelation between the steep growth of the Korean Protestant Church and the economic growth that took place in Korea from 1960 to 1990. The chapter then scrutinizes the contribution of the western missionaries to Korea in the fields of education and national health. Finally, the chapter addresses the influence of early western missionaries to Korea in terms of

how their eschatology of Dispensational Premillennialism affected Korean Christian understandings of and attitudes towards ecosystems and the environment.

## **1.1. A Short History of Christianity in Korea from 1770s to 2000s**

### **1.1.1 Catholicism in Korea (1770 – 1884)**

It was the Catholic Church that first introduced Christianity to Korea.<sup>88</sup> Catholicism might have begun in Korea as far back as 1592, prior to the arrival of the first western missionary to Korea in 1884. However, there is no confirmed record of the distribution of Korean Christians at that time.<sup>89</sup> In fact, Konishi Yukinaga, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Japanese naval general, was a Roman Catholic. He was accompanied by Francis Xavier, a Jesuit priest, when he invaded Joseon Dynasty Korea during the period 1592 to 1598. Many Koreans were taken to Japanese prisons as a result of the invasion. Some prisoners who were held in Nagasaki were converted to Christianity. However, although some scholars argue for the possibility of there having been contact between Korean prisoners and Francis Xavier, there is no evidence of missionary activity during the era of Joseon Dynasty in Korea.<sup>90</sup> It wasn't until around 1770 that Catholicism actually became established in Korea. A group of political scholars called

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<sup>88</sup> Some scholars claim that it is possible that the Christian gospel reached Korea in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries as a form of 'Nestorian' or Russian Orthodox Christianity. See Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 474-75.

<sup>89</sup> Some scholars mention the possibility of there being a connection between Nestorianism and Korean Buddhism. See 한국기독교사 연구회 (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies); *한국 기독교의 역사 I* (*A History of the Korean Church I*, Seoul: 기독교문사 (The Christian Literature Press), 32-42; Kyoung Bea Min, *한국 기독교회사: 한국 민족교회 형성 과정사* (*A History of Christian Churches in Korea: A Process of A History of the Formation of the National Church in Korea*, Yonsei University Press, 2007), 33-40; Yi Mahn-Yol, *한국 기독교 수용사 연구* (*A Study of Acceptance of Christianity in Korea*, Seoul: Dore Press, 1998), 14-44). In Su Kim also pointed out the possibility of contact having been made with Christianity in the era of Koryo Dynasty. See In Su Kim, *한국 기독교회의 역사 I* (*A History of the Korean Church I*, Yonsei University Press, 1997), 20-25.

<sup>90</sup> Sebastian C. H. Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 14-15.

*Silhak-ja* (Korean Confucians) based at Juesoa, a Buddhist temple in Gyeonggi province, and at the nearby hermitage Cheonjin-am, read and studied a Catholic publication entitled Matteo Ricci's *Cheonju Silui* (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven) in order to learn about western religion. One of the leaders of *Silhak-ja* (Yi Byeok) asked Seung Hun Yi, who was the son of an ambassador and accompanied his father to Beijing, to visit the Catholic missionaries in China so that they could gain more knowledge of Catholicism. As requested, he met with Alexandre de Gouvea, the bishop of Beijing. After learning Catholic doctrines from the bishop, Seung Hun Yi was baptized in 1784 by French Jesuit missionary Jean Joseph de Grammont. When he came back to Korea in 1784, Seung Hun Yi conveyed Christian books, articles, images and other religious items to the *Silhak* scholars. These scholars propagated the theology and doctrines of Christianity to people around the country, and this became the foundation of Catholicism in Korea.<sup>91</sup> In the years until 1801, the number of Catholics rapidly increased to around 10,000. They devoted themselves to keeping Catholic instructions and doctrines as much as to prohibiting the Confucian ritual of ancestor worship – a service called *Chesa* which was considered the most important Korean social norm that people should follow. The rejection of *Chesa* brought about systematic persecution from the Korean government, which advocated a Confucian society system. C. S. Chung illustrates this conflict:

Christianity commands ultimate loyalty to God. This uncompromising feature of the 'prophetic' religion of the West brought about its official condemnation by the Confucian government, and this basic anti-Christian policy was to last to the next tragic century of the Catholic movement in Korea.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 19-21.

<sup>92</sup> Chai Sik Chung, "Christianity as Heterodoxy: An Aspect of General Cultural Orientation in Traditional Korea", in *Korea's Response to the West*, ed. Yung-Hwan Jo (Kalamazoo: The Korea Research and



The government arrested a thousand Catholics in 1801, and executed three hundred Catholic believers. This was called *the Shinyu* year of Persecution (1801-1802).<sup>93</sup> There were three military forces threatening the entire country at this time: France, the Russian Empire, and the United States of America. Intimidation by foreign powers resulted in an aversion of Koreans towards all foreign culture and thought, and most Koreans recognized Catholicism in Korea as an agent of foreign powers. The most severe persecution towards the Catholics took place between 1866 and 1873 through the Prince Regent Taewon-gun, who insisted on a policy of national isolation. The death toll of martyrs from these extreme persecutions was over 8000, almost half of the total number of Catholics in Korea at that time. These severe religious persecutions ended with the enthronement of King *Gojong* on 22 December, 1873. Despite these relentless religious persecutions, 13,625 Catholics still survived in 1885.<sup>94</sup>

### **1.1.2 Commencement and Settlement of Korean Protestantism (1884 – 1910)**

After American missionary Dr Horace N. Allen took the very first step to establish Korean Protestantism in September 1884, many western missionaries came to Korea during the next two decades. They dedicated themselves to education and medicine in order to establish a favourable environment for missionary work. Their involvement

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Publications, 1971), 57-86, esp. 71

<sup>93</sup> There were four reasons for the *Shinyu* year persecution: 1) Exaltation of God above king and parents; 2) Belief in life after death; 3) The threat towards the Confucian System through class and gender inclusiveness; 4) The encouraging of women's piety discouraged reproduction. See Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 32.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted from Hang-Sik, *Eschatology and Ecology: Experiences of the Korean Church*, 69-70. For the original source, see H. Y. Yu, *A Study of Catholicism under King Kojong* (Seoul: Ulliyu Munhwasa, 1984), 38-39.

and devotion in these areas helped to maintain an amicable relationship with Koreans and their government. However, Catholic churches failed to keep this new friendliness by ignoring the proposal of the Korean government not to build a cathedral on land which was near to both the royal palaces and *Chongmyo*, the shrine constructed for services of worship to the royal ancestors. This act of building the cathedral incurred the wrath of the Korean government and led to an edict in May 1888 prohibiting the propagation of Catholicism.<sup>95</sup>

In contrast, after Dr. John L. Nevius (1829-1893) visited Seoul in 1890, Protestant churches in Korea decided to adopt the Nevius Method which focused on self-support, self-government, self-propagation, and the independence of the Church. This missionary strategy gave priority to Bible study, the need for native Koreans to carry on the missionary work, and the Church's self-determination.<sup>96</sup> This was a totally different system compared to that of the Catholic Church, which depended heavily on the instruction and leadership of Roman curia.

In 1883, the early western missionaries to Korea created an organization for the translation of the Bible into the Korean language. This goal was achieved in 1910 when members of this committee completed translating the entire Bible.<sup>97</sup> As Protestant churches grew, six western missionaries (four from the Presbyterian

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<sup>95</sup> Hang-Sik, *Eschatology and Ecology: Experiences of the Korean Church*, 72.

<sup>96</sup> Charles Allen Clark, *The Nevius Plan for Mission Work Illustrated in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1937), trans. Yong Kyu Park and Chun Sup Kim *한국 교회와 네비우스 선교정책* (*The Korean Christian Church and the Nevius Plan for Mission*) Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1994), 44-45; Richard Rutt, "Self-supporting Church in Korea", *Missionary Review of the World*, 23: 443-49; In Su Kim, *The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea*, *한국 기독교회의 역사 I* (*A History of the Korean Church I*, Yonsei University Press, 1997), 192-221; *한국 기독교의 역사 I* (*A History of Christianity in Korea I*, Seoul: Korea, The Christian Literature Press, 2011), 173-76; Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 73-75, 100.

<sup>97</sup> *The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea*, *한국 기독교의 역사 I*; (*A History of Christianity in Korea I*), 119-134, 153-163.

denomination and two from the Methodists) formed a council named “the General Council of Protestant Evangelical Mission in Korea” in order to not only collaborate on the establishment of a united theological framework and on missionary work but also to prevent excessive competition among Korean Protestant denominations for missionary work such as building churches in a region.<sup>98</sup> The Protestant denominations in Korea shared church education materials and cooperated in medical work. In terms of an agreement concerning the partition of the districts for mission, it took four years to make a final agreement. By 1909, this agreement had been in operation for almost thirty years.<sup>99</sup>

Along with this ecumenical exertion, two new catalysts for church growth happened in 1907 and 1909 – 1910. The first is known as “The Great Revival” and the latter as “The Million Movement.” The Great Revival occurred in Pyung-Yang city in January 1907. Countless Christians in Pyung-Yang repented of their sins and experienced a receiving of the Holy Spirit when they attended worship services. They strived to pray to God and study the Bible, and they dispersed to preach the gospel to their neighbours. This movement spread throughout the nation and grew into “the Million Movement”, which was an attempt by the whole Church to evangelize the entire Korean people. These movements intensified the growth of Protestantism in Korea and became the ground work for the transplantation of Korean nationalism into the Korean Protestant Church.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Charles Allen Clark, *한국 교회와 네비우스 선교정책 (The Korean Christian Church and the Nevius Plan for Mission)*, 119.

<sup>99</sup> The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 I (A History of Christianity in Korea I)*, 163-68.

<sup>100</sup> The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 I (A History of Christianity in Korea I)*, 221-36; Yong Kyu Park, *평양 대부흥운동 (The Great Revivalism in Korea: Its History,*

### 1.1.3 Korean Protestantism under Japanese Colonialism (1910-1945)

Korea became a Japanese colony for thirty-five years from 1910 to 1945. This was a difficult time for the Korean Protestant Church. The Japanese government persecuted the Church, not only because the Japanese government considered it to be the most powerful political agent, given that it received protection from western powers,<sup>101</sup> but also because the Korean Protestant Church played a pivotal role in terms of the independence movement.<sup>102</sup> One clear example of the Japanese government's persecution of churches was the Korean Conspiracy Case in 1912, an incident fabricated by the Japanese government. The government used physical force to drag out a confession from 122 people presumed to be conspirators in a planned assassination of the Japanese governor-general, Terauchi Masatake. Among them, 107 people were Christians, and 98 of the Christians were important Christian leaders.<sup>103</sup> After this incident, the Japanese government promulgated "the Private School Law" (사립학교 규칙). The Private School Law was designed to prohibit the teaching of scripture and Korean history in the private Christian schools. Moreover, this law meant that the Church should not only acquire government permission in order to build new churches but that they should also provide reports on all church activities and statistics, including means of propagation, the content of textbooks, and the qualification of teachers and pastors.<sup>104</sup>

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*Character, and Impact 1901 – 1910*, Seoul: Life Book, 2000), 400-28.

<sup>101</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 108.

<sup>102</sup> The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 I (A History of Christianity in Korea I)*, 253-83.

<sup>103</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 113.

<sup>104</sup> Sung Jun Lee, *미국선교사와 한국 근대교육: 미션스쿨의 설립과 일제하의 갈등 (American Missionaries and Modern Education of Korea: Establishment of Mission Schools and Conflicts under Japanese Imperialism)*, Seoul: Korea, A Research Institution of Korean Christianity, 2007), 93-100.

It was in such ways that the Japanese government tried to control the Protestant Church in Korea. However, this could not prevent the involvement of Korean Protestant churches in movements against Japanese rule. The Korean churches actively participated in The Independence Movement on 1 March, 1919, which spread nationwide over that year. The principal characteristic of this resistance movement was nonviolence. However, the Japanese military force responded to it in a cruel way. Statistics show that the death toll from this movement was 7,509, and that the numbers of Koreans injured and arrested were 15,961 and 47,000 respectively. About 25 per cent of those arrested were Christian. Among the thirty-three important leaders of the independence movement, the so-called 'Thirty-three Representatives of the People', sixteen were Christians. This was an astonishing figure when compared with the fact that the proportion of Christians in the total population was 1.5 per cent.<sup>105</sup> As such, political conflict between the Japanese government and the Korean Protestant Church occurred frequently: The USA government, the American Board of Foreign Missions, and the Japanese government requested that western missionaries to Korea should not participate in social and political movements, and, furthermore, taught Christians not to engage in these campaigns. From this period, the Korean Protestant Church not only officially preserved a neutral position on the political agenda and published Christian books and articles without any comment on political issues, but also set limits in church ministry for only spiritual and personal salvation.<sup>106</sup>

The Korean Protestant Church faced its greatest difficulties from the Japanese

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<sup>105</sup> The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 II (A History of Christianity in Korea II)*, Seoul: Korea, The Christian Literature Press, 2012), 33-48.

<sup>106</sup> Sung Jun Lee, *미국선교사와 한국 근대교육: 미션스쿨의 설립과 일제하의 갈등 (American Missionaries and Modern Education of Korea: Establishment of Mission Schools and Conflicts Under Japanese Imperialism)*, 153-79.

government between the 1930s and 1940s; this was because Japanese *Shinto* worship was enforced throughout the country, including in schools and even in churches.<sup>107</sup> Western missionaries to Korea and Korean Christian leaders refused to comply; however, there was no freedom of this right to choose unless they were prepared to close their schools and educational institutions. Pyong Yang Theological Seminary was abolished in 1938 precisely because of its rejection of *Shinto* worship. Many western missionaries were forcibly repatriated to their countries.<sup>108</sup> By 1936, most of the Korean Protestant denominations and the Catholics had complied with the order of the Japanese government. The Presbyterian churches – the largest denomination in Korea – finally accepted it in 1938.

The Korean Protestant Church was heavily damaged under Japanese rule, with this period seeing the abolition of about two hundred local churches, the martyrdom of more than fifty Christians, and the imprisonment of two thousand church leaders.<sup>109</sup> Thankfully, however, after thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule, Korea was able to restore independence at the end of World War II on 15 August, 1945.

The number of Christians recorded between 1907 and 1941 was as follows (see below):

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<sup>107</sup> Shinto is a polytheistic religion which worships spirits of the ancestors, historical figures, and even nature. See, 'The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea', *한국 기독교의 역사 II (A History of Christianity in Korea II)*, 257-70. "Although the first Shinto shrine had been established in Seoul in 1915, it was not until 1925 that officials and students began to be compelled to participate in Shinto ceremonies." See Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 150.

<sup>108</sup> See *Crisis Decade: A History of the Missionary Work of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. 1937-1947*, ed. W. Reginald Wheeler (The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Foreign Missions and Overseas Interchurch Service, 1950), 344-45.

<sup>109</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 151-53. After the Presbyterian denomination's acceptance of Shinto worship, this denomination split into numerous sub-Presbyterian denominations. See 'The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea', *한국 기독교의 역사 II (A History of Christianity in Korea II)*, 257-70; The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 II (A History of Christianity in Korea II)*, Seoul: Korea, The Christian Literature Press, 2009), 82-96

## Membership Trends in the Korean Church under Japanese Rule: <sup>110</sup>

	1907	1909	1911	1917	1919	1921	1923	1925
<b>Catholicism</b>				80,613	81,504	91,941	85,508	89,798
<b>Presbyterian</b>	69,098	119,273	144,261	114,106	141,044	181,298	186,785	182,650
<b>Methodist</b>	33,319	38,390	37,035	53,638	43,856	60,030	63,787	58,434
<b>Others</b>				22,341	25,747	16,100	21,807	11,834
<b>Total</b>				270,698	292,141	349,399	375,887	342,716

	1927	1929	1931	1933	1935	1937	1939	1941
<b>Catholicism</b>	48,760	58,699	66,626	94,387	105,324	112,610	113,562	108,079
<b>Presbyterian</b>	144,898	174,312	197,528	239,127	260,821	287,082	286,268	256,575
<b>Methodist</b>	46,528	47,831	45,142	48,278	53,634	54,574	53,002	50,286
<b>Others</b>	18,891	26,020	29,167	32,850	39,650	37,837	49,456	32,475
<b>Total</b>	259,077	306,862	338,463	414,642	459,429	492,103	502,288	447,415

### 1.1.4 The Correlation Between Capitalism in South Korea and the Explosive Growth of Christianity

In Korean history, there have been two major difficult situations in terms of social, economic, and political developments. The first was when Korea was annexed by the Japanese Empire from 1910 to 1945. The second was the Korean War, which took place between North and South Korea from 25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953. The North

<sup>110</sup> These statistics are drawn from several sources: The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 II (A History of Christianity in Korea II)*, 94-95; Research Institution of Korea Religions, *종교연감 (Yearbook of Religions in Korea)*, Seoul, Korea: Research Institution of Korea Religions, 1993, 1995, 1996-7). Quoted from Chang-Dae Gwak, 'Ecclesiology and Membership Trends in the South Korean Churches' (Ph.D thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2000), 28.

Korean military force was supported by China and the Soviet Union, whereas the South Korean military force was mainly assisted by the United States of America. These two major historical events devastated almost all aspects of Korea so seriously that the country was initially not able to recover. South Korea, however, overcame these difficulties, and achieved rapid economic development (or modernization) between 1962 and 1994. Economic growth increased at an annual average rate of 10 per cent, with an annual export growth of 20 per cent. This is referred to as 'The Miracle on the Han River'. Today, South Korea is around eighth to twelfth in the international trade ranking.<sup>111</sup>

There was a further miracle in South Korea. This was the explosive growth of the Protestant Church. Interestingly, the starting point and rapid growth process of these two miracles occurred in almost the same period, from approximately 1960 to 1990.<sup>112</sup> This factor poses an interesting question in terms of there being a possible correlation between these two events of explosive growth. Can there be any relationship between them?

In his well-known book entitled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber tried to explain several factors in terms of values which enable the rise of capitalism, stating that "Calvinism ... supplies the moral energy and drive of the capitalist entrepreneur."<sup>113</sup> To be more specific, a combination of the important virtues and ideas in Puritan doctrines (Calvinism or Protestantism in a broad sense) such as hard work, diligence, a faithful life, asceticism, and the desire to make money or profits

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<sup>111</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/korea/overview>\_Last accessed 3 December 2015.

<sup>112</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 216-30.

<sup>113</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (New York: Routledge, 1976[1930]), xiii.



were motivating forces for the reinforcement of the spirit of capitalism.<sup>114</sup> Following Weber, many scholars have tried to investigate the function of religion in promoting or encouraging social change or action. In parallel with these kinds of studies, many scholars in South Korea have found that Korean Protestantism played a pivotal role in the country's modernization and early industrial capitalism.<sup>115</sup> Paul Hang-Sik Cho argues this as follows:

The identification of Christianity as a gateway to modernity and success, both personal and national, especially added to its attractiveness during periods of rapid economic development, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Because the United States was valued as Korea's most important ally at the time, and since the American economic and cultural influence was strong and positively received, the whole American package of progress, economic dynamism, egalitarianism and Protestant Christianity was enthusiastically embraced by many progressive Koreans, as good as for them as well as good for Korea.<sup>116</sup>

One interesting study, published in 1970 and entitled *Religious Preference of Korean College Students*, investigated the most influential religion in South Korea, and stated that Christianity, including Catholicism, had been viewed as the best way for South Korea to enhance modernization and economic development since the early 1970s. The study concluded that whereas Confucianism had contributed a little to the rapid economic development of South Korea, there was no contribution from Shamanism or Buddhism. Most students identified Christianity as exerting an influence on the implementation of industrial capitalism in South Korea.<sup>117</sup> According

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<sup>114</sup> Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 75-84.

<sup>115</sup> Jin-Young Kim, "The Role of Christianity in the Economic Modernization of South Korea", (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Florida State University, 1984), ii.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology Experiences of the Korean Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 58.

<sup>117</sup> Jae Ryong Shim, "Modernity and Religiosity of Korean People Today", *Seoul Journal of Korean*

to the 1982 Gallup Research Institute Report, the baby boom generation, which were born during the Korean War (1950-1953) and also accounted for over 30 per cent of the population of South Korea, tended to follow either Protestantism or Catholicism.<sup>118</sup>

This evidence enables us to find a possible answer as to whether there was a correlation between religion and capitalism in South Korea. Actually, the starting point of the modernization and industrialization of Korea was the period in which western missionaries (especially those from America) came to Korea in 1884, this was because they built the foundation of the Korean economy through the teaching of modern education and industrial technology, as well as building many educational institutions and hospitals.

With this in mind, this section now turns to deal with a short history of the Korean Protestant Church following the era of the Korean War, with the aim of elucidating the influence of the early western missionaries to Korea.

#### **1.1.5 The Korean War and the Dissolution of the Korean Protestant Church (1945-1960)**

After its liberation from Japanese control, the Korean Peninsula split into two opposing parties: the northern part was under the control of the Soviet force and the southern under that of the USA.<sup>119</sup> Finally, by 1948, the presence of these two conflicting sides resulted in the establishment of two different governments in the respective regions: the democratic government in the South and the communist government in the North.

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*Studies* 4 (1991): 165-176.

<sup>118</sup> Ro Bong-Rin and Marlin L. Nelson, Preface, in *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, ed. Kim Joon – Gon, Han Chul-Ha (Seoul, Korea: Word of Life Press, 1983), 3.

<sup>119</sup> “The Russians stopped at the 28<sup>th</sup> (of latitude) as agreed, and US forces moved into the south...” For a more detailed explanation of the political situation of Korea at that time, see Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 155-61.

This political situation has been continued as a result of the Korean War.<sup>120</sup> In these political circumstances, churches located in the north were persecuted by the newly established North Communist government. The government held all important public affairs on Sundays specifically so that they intruded on the church's ministry. In 1950, they established the Christian league, the Kidokkyo-Kyodo-Yonmaeng (기독교 연맹) – which supported the communist party – and forced all leaders of the churches to join this league. If they refused, the government would arrest, torture, and kill them. This suppression continued until just before the outbreak of the Korean War. Thus, many Christians moved to the southern area of Korea.

In contrast, the churches in the south had a new opportunity to participate in the political arena. Many Christians occupied seats in the parliament, even at the highest level; the first president of South Korea, Rhee Syng-Man, was a devoted Protestant Church elder. According to Jung Suck Rhee, churches in the south enjoyed not only privileges and a high position in the assembly, but complete support from returning American missionaries to Korea, even though Christians counted for less than 10 per cent of the total population at that time.<sup>121</sup> Chung-Shin Park also mentioned this situation, as follows:

Christian ministers and lay members assumed influential positions in politics and society in the Rhee era. Rhee himself was a Church elder, and Vice-President Ham T'aeyong was a minister, as was Yi Yunyong, acting Prime Minister during the early years of the republic. The National Assembly included Church ministers and lay leaders such as Kim Sangdon, Hwang Songsu, Pak Yongch'ul, Kim Yoyon, and Chong Ilhyong. Christian ministers and lay leaders

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<sup>120</sup> Peter Lowe, *The Origins of the Korean War* (London: Longman, 1986), 19-42.

<sup>121</sup> The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 III (A History of Christianity in Korea III)*, 74-79.

accounted for 25 percent of the first Assembly.... According to Kim Yongmo, Christians occupied some 40 percent of political leadership positions, even though they constituted less than 10 percent of the South Korean population.<sup>122</sup>

However, the churches failed to make good use of this chance for enhancing the country. This was because of their tendency for overly pro-government action, and because of the Korean Protestant Church's internal disagreements caused by complex factors regarding theological differences. These factors involved the ecumenical movement, and the struggle between several parties within the Church. The largest division of a denomination in Korea was in the Presbyterian Church. It split into three sub-denominations named Koshin, the Hap-Tong, and the Tong-Hap Presbyterian Church, and each segregated denomination built a separate seminary for teaching their theology and doctrine. Thus, they squandered a chance to contribute to Korean society and improve the Korean country as a united and compelling force.<sup>123</sup>

While this internal church conflict continued, the Korean War broke out on 25 June, 1950, and lasted for three years. Its outbreak devastated the entire nation. The total number of deaths from the war was about five million.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, tens of thousands of Christians were slaughtered by the Korean communists. Fortunately, after the end of the war, international aid – especially from the United States – provided huge amounts of money to the country for re-establishing Korea. American mission agencies contributed to relief supplies with food, clothing and medicines.

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<sup>122</sup> Chung-Shin Park, *Protestantism and Politics in Korea* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003), 173-74.

<sup>123</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology Experiences of the Korean Church*, 76-77.

<sup>124</sup> The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 III (A History of Christianity in Korea III)*, 53.

According to Kang In Chel, the support from both American missionary agencies and the USA government made it easier for Korea to accept western political, social, and cultural systems – and even the system of the American Protestant Church.<sup>125</sup> Thanks to the preference of Korean people towards Christianity, the total number of Korean Protestant Christians increased from 500,000 members in 1953 to 700,000 in 1960. Also, the total number of Catholics grew from 166,400 (1953) to 451,000 (1960).<sup>126</sup>

### **1.1.6 A Steep Growth in both the Korean Protestant Church and Economic Development (1960s-1990s)**

The experience of Korean Protestant churches in terms of the danger posed by communists through the Korean War stimulated the majority of Korean Protestant churches to welcome the government of Park Chung-Hee (1961-1979), which was inaugurated by military coup in May 1960 and insisted on policies focusing on anti-Communist ideology and growth-oriented economics. This kind of military government, and other similar policies which emphasized economic growth, were maintained through the governments of Jun Du-Hwan (1980-1988) and Ro Tae-Woo (1988-1993).<sup>127</sup> Through the acceleration of economic development brought about by government policy, the system of society and the economic trend had changed from a primarily industry-oriented economy of the 1960s into a tertiary-industry-oriented one

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<sup>125</sup> In Chel, Kang *한국기독교와 국가 시민사회 1945-1960 (Korean Christianity, Nation-state and Civil Society: 1945-1960)* (Seoul: The Institution of Korean Church History, 1996), 270-74.

<sup>126</sup> Jung Suck Rhee, 'Secularization and Sanctification: A Study of Karl Barth's Doctrine of Sanctification and its Contextual Application to the Korean Church', (Ph.D thesis, Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 1995), 228.

<sup>127</sup> Kim, Y. J. *한국교회역의 역사 (A History of the Korean Church)*, Seoul: Reformism Theological Association, 1992), 276; Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 207-08; Chung-Shin Park, *Protestantism and Politics in Korea*, 182-88.

in the 1980s. A large number of young people moved into cities, because it was easier to find employment in urban areas. The chart showing the distribution of population between 1961 and 1980 illustrates the phenomenon in terms of interregional population movement. In 1960, about 75 per cent of the population lived in rural areas, and 25 per cent dwelled in urban areas. However, in the 1980s, these figures had exactly reversed.<sup>128</sup> Unfortunately, both factors, i.e. rapid economic growth and a booming of the urban population, not only brought about some degree of conflict among the residents of the city (due to distributive inequality) but also aggravated people's anxiety and concerns regarding issues such as deprivation, insecurity, and unease about an uncertain future.<sup>129</sup> In these circumstances, the Korean Protestant Church participated in providing social services and carried out a variety of activities for propagation of the Gospel. For example, the industrial chaplaincies, which were built in the 1950s, achieved brilliant success in the propagation of Korean Christianity in the 1960s and 1970s, because they could preach the gospel to industrial workers in their workplace and support, to some degree, their needs. Moreover, army chaplaincies played a pivotal role in increasing the number of soldiers who became Christians, as it has been mandatory for South Korean men to fulfil military service for a certain period of time (two or three years) since the Korean War. According to the army religion survey of 1955, about one sixth of the total number of the Korean army was Christian, which indicates an increase of 10 per cent in four years.<sup>130</sup>

In addition, there were many mass rallies held by Korean Protestant churches

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<sup>128</sup> David Steinberg, *The Republic of Korea: Pluralizing Politics*, in ed. Larry Diamond et al, *Politics in Developing Countries* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 402.

<sup>129</sup> Chee Joon, No, *한국 개신교 사회학* (*Korea Protestant Sociology*, Seoul: Hanwool, 1998), 19-20.

<sup>130</sup> Allen Clark, *A History of the Church in Korea*, 256; Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 215-16.

in Seoul, such as the Billy Graham Crusade of 1973, Expo 74, the 77 Holy Assembly Crusade, the 1980 World Evangelization Crusade, and the Protestant Centenary Celebration of 1984. In these rallies, attendees listened to sermons given by prominent world Christian leaders such as Billy Graham. The total number of people who converted to Christianity through these rallies had reached 1,272,000 by 1980. Many Koreans were surprised at the comprehensive activities of the Korean Protestant Church across various areas of Korean society and believed that Christianity could satisfy their needs and improve the quality of their lives.<sup>131</sup>

The total number of Korean Christians in the 1960s was only about 1,441,864. This figure had increased remarkably to 17,487,397 by 1995. This illustrates that the number of Korean Christians doubled in each decade between the 1960s and 1990s. The proportion of Korean Christians in 1989 made up 25 per cent of the Korean population (42 million people).<sup>132</sup> One study gives the total number of Christians from 1960 to 1995 as follows:

Year	Protestants	Catholics	Total	Year	Protestants	Catholics	Total
1960	1,040,114	401,750	1,441,864	1982	7,637,010	1,439,778	9,076,788
1964	2,152,540	748,818	2,901,358	1984	8,460,135	1,590,625	10,050,760
1969	3,192,621	751,217	3,943,838	1985	10,312,813	2,423,181	12,735,994
1971	3,217,996	779,000	3,996,996	1989	11,888,374	2,632,990	14,521,364
1974	3,720,000	1,012,000	4,732,000	1993	14,463,301	3,057,822	17,521,123
1975	4,019,313	1,012,209	5,031,522	1994	15,055,609	3,296,451	18,352,060
1977	5,001,491	1,093,829	6,095,320	1995	13,909,284	3,560,113	17,487,397
1980	7,180,627	1,321,293	8,501,920				

Membership for Protestant and Catholics: 1960-1995 (Denominational Figures)<sup>133</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Kim Joon Gon, "Korea's Total Evangelization Movement", in *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, ed. Bong-Rin Ro and Nelson L. Marlin (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995), 59.

<sup>132</sup> Chang Dae Gwak, *Ecclesiology and Membership Trends in the South Korean Churches*, 36.

<sup>133</sup> These statistics are drawn from several sources. See, *The Institution of Korean Church History* 1989, 254, 1990: 96-97, 260-61, Yearbook of Religions in Korea 1993, 1995, 1996-7. Quoted from Changdae Gwak, *Ecclesiology and Membership Trends in the South Korean Churches*, 28.

This table shows us the rapid growth of Korean Protestantism.

### 1.1.7 A Period of Stagnation and Decline in Christian Membership (1990s to Today)

The Korean Protestant Church, which in the periods just discussed had recorded unprecedented growth, began to show stagnation by the late 1990s and inclined to a decrease in membership. Interestingly, although the total number of religious people increased in these periods, the membership trend of Protestants in Korea declined a little. On the other hand, the total population of Korean Catholics in the same period showed a high growth rate of 75 per cent. The analysis of these trends in Christianity in South Korea is as follows.<sup>134</sup>

Total Population of religious Koreans	1991		1995		2005	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
	23,365	54.0	22,598	50.7	24,971	53.1
Protestants	8,037	18.6	8,760	19.7	8,616	18.3
Catholics	2,477	5.7	2,951	6.6	5,146	11

[Unit number: 1000]

Why did this phenomenon occur? An interesting book entitled *A History of Korean Christianity* gives several reasons for the popularity of Catholicism and its numerical growth in South Korea between 1995 and 2005: providing support to the weak in society, the trustworthiness of clergy, peaceful relationships with other religions, and faithfulness to proper religious missions. In fact, after South Korea's economic crash in 1998, Catholicism in South Korea focused its ministry on helping people who had lost their jobs, and became a very active denomination providing social services and

<sup>134</sup> The Institute of Korean Church History Studies, *한국 기독교의 역사 연구III (The History of Korean Protestant Church III)*, 27, 118.



programmes for the poor and marginalized. Moreover, they supported people who lived in rural areas and thus faced economic difficulty affected by environmental changes. These actions led to the public having a good impression of and immeasurable faithfulness towards Catholicism.<sup>135</sup> *A History of Korean Christianity* also comments on Protestantism's unpopularity and cites the causes of the reduction in numbers of Protestants in South Korea between 1995 and 2005 to be as follows: zealous evangelism, emphasis on numerical church growth, criticism towards other religions, conservative theology, the lack of leadership, a materialist outlook, and so on. As shown above, reasons for the numerical growth of Catholicism in South Korea between 1995 and 2005 are mostly the opposite of those given for the Protestant decline.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, rather than becoming a means of community support and development, the mainline Protestant Church sought self-centred aims such as technological developments for enhancing the qualities of their church's sound and video systems and remodelling of their churches – even building new churches for themselves. In addition, the emphasis of mainline churches on both material blessings from God and church growth through evangelical work was seen from the viewpoint of the public as promoting the qualities of business companies rather than social service agencies even though the Protestant churches participated in social welfare as much as Catholicism.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, Presbyterian-Methodist-Holiness Church denominations, which accounted for almost three quarters of Protestantism in South Korea, maintained an evangelical conservative faith, including doctrines such as biblical inerrancy, premillennialism (Historical Premillennialism and Premillennial

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<sup>135</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 291.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 285.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 276-77.

Dispensationalism), and Amillennialist outlooks towards the world. These characteristics instilled an awareness in the public that Korean Protestant churches were a very exclusive religion and hostile towards other religions.<sup>138</sup>

Now, the chapter turns to address the influence of the early western missionaries to Korea in terms of education and national health.

## **1.2 Contribution of the Western Missionaries to Korea in the Fields of Education and National Health**

### **1.2.1 Medical Activities**

It was American missionaries that built the foundation of the modern schools and hospitals in Korea, after the door was opened to foreign countries in 1876. When medical doctor H.N Allen arrived in Seoul, Korea, through Incheon port on 20 September, 1884, it was the starting point of Korean Protestant history. He brought medical science to the Korean people in order to propagate Christianity. In this period, there were no modern hospitals; the only diagnosis and treatment service that Korea had was “Hanyakbang (한약방)”, where a practitioner of oriental medicine prepared medicines with medicinal herbs. Allen served as a doctor of the Korean royal court in recognition of his contributions to the medical treatment of Min Yeong-Hwan, a nephew of Empress Myeongseong, when he had suffered a deep wound in the Gapsin Coup on 4 December, 1884 in the late Joseon Dynasty of Korea. Using this example as momentum, he requested to be allowed by the Korean Government to build a modern hospital in Seoul. The government permitted it, and the first national

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 275.

hospital was built. It was called Kwanghyewon on 10 April, 1885 (after being initially named Jejungwon on 12 March, 1885). This hospital not only carried out medical services but, from 1886, also started to teach western medical technology to sixteen selected students who wanted to be doctors.<sup>139</sup> In fact, that was the origin of modern medical science education in Korea. Moreover, American missionary O. R. Avison, the newly appointed missionary director of Jejungwon, established Jejungwon medical university in Seoul in 1899, and this is the predecessor of Yonsei University's medical school, which remains one of the top medical schools in Korea today. Furthermore, medical doctoral missionary William Benton Scranton founded a modern hospital called "Si byoung Won" on 15 June, 1886. This hospital mainly carried out medical services for the poor and for women.<sup>140</sup> The American missionaries built many hospitals, including Matthew Hospital (1890), Incheon Hospital (1890), Busan Hospital, Busan Il Shin Hospital (1893), Jenkeon Memorial Hospital (1897), and Na Hospital (1910). The total amount of hospitals and medical clinic centres which western missionaries had built by 1910 was twenty-eight.<sup>141</sup>

### 1.2.2 Educational Activities

Missionary Henry G. Appenzeller opened the first school, Paejae Haktang (배재학당), in 1886, where he taught two Korean students English. This school greatly enhanced

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<sup>139</sup> The main patients of this hospital were ruling class men and royal family members. See, An Institution of Korea Christian History Research, The Society of the History of Christianity in Korea, *한국 기독교의 역사 III (A History of Christianity in Korea III)*, 145-49.

<sup>140</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 65-66.

<sup>141</sup> Man Yall Lee, *한국 기독교와 민족의식 (Christianity in Korea and National Consciousness*, Seoul: Knowledge Industry, 1991), 460-61; Min Chal kim, *한국 의료의 발전과 기독교 (Christianity and the Development of the Korean Medical System)*, in *한국 사회의 발전과 기독교 (Christianity and the Development of Korean Society)*, ed. Bong Ho Son and Sung Pho Choi (Seoul: Ye Young Communication, 2012), 179-203.

social awareness, and thirty-two students had enrolled in this school in the first five months after its opening. Korean Emperor Gojong supported this school, and the institution had expanded to 200 students by 1895. Paejae Haktang (배재학당) has produced many men of distinguished talent. One of them was the first President of the Republic of Korea, Syngman Rhee (August 1948 to April 1960). Although students registered at this school in order to achieve the purpose of learning English for the first time, they came to believe in Christianity and participated in Bible study.<sup>142</sup> Western missionaries to Korea who recognized this educational situation of increasing numbers of students began to establish education institutions. One of the typical missionaries was American Horace G. Underwood. He began his educational mission in the form of a school-orphanage, called “Kyongshin Haktang (경신학당)”. This school mainly focused on caring for and educating orphans and the poor. American missionary George W. Gilmore mentioned the background to the establishment of this school:

The needs of some boys with whom he had come into contact suggested to him the establishing of an orphanage, and he mentioned this to some Koreans of high rank, through whom knowledge of the project came to the king..... The only inmates admitted were boys, and before long there were over forty of these who were lodged, boarded and taught in the institution.<sup>143</sup>

The establishment of the first girls' school was commenced by Mary F. Scranton, the mother of American missionary William Benton Scranton, on 31 May, 1886. It was

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<sup>142</sup> Paejae Middle and High School, *배재학당의 역사 (The History of Paejae Haktang During Eight Years)*, Seoul: PaeJae Middle and High School, 1965), 100.

<sup>143</sup> George W. Gilmore, *Korea from its Capital: With a Chapter on Missions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-school work, 1892), 297.

called “Ewha Women’s Institution”. Building a school for women was a highly innovative event at that time because most men considered that women were not worthy of being respected and having the opportunity for education. Sang Taek Lee mentioned men’s attitude towards women at that time as follows: “In 1885 the missionaries commenced the first school for girls (a radical educational concept). In the Confucian tradition, education was for men only, women being mere chattels, even though they were human beings, there was no concept of equality.”<sup>144</sup> This university produced not only the first female medical doctor, Park Esther, but also Gwansun Ryu, who was an organizer of a nonviolent resistance movement against the Japanese’s annexation that took place on 1 March, 1919. This school was the predecessor of Ewha Women’s University, which is currently the world’s largest female university and the most prestigious university in South Korea. There were many women’s schools built by the western missionaries to Korea, including Jung Shin Women’s School, Kye Jun Women’s School, Nu See Women’s School, JinSung Women’s School and Shin Myong Women’s School, among others. The schools for women accounted for half of the twenty-five educational institutes that western missionaries to Korea founded between 1886 and 1908.<sup>145</sup> Surprisingly, there were 796 Christian schools with 41,000 students throughout Korea in 1910. Comparatively, this was about twice the number of schools built by the Korean government at that time.<sup>146</sup>

As has already been illustrated, western missionaries to Korea not only contributed to the establishment of the modern education system in hospitals in

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<sup>144</sup> Sang Taek Lee, *Religion and Social Formation in Korea: Minjung and Millenarianism* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), 132-33.

<sup>145</sup> Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 687.

<sup>146</sup> In-Soo Soon, *한국의 현대교육역사 (Modern Education History of Korea)* (Seoul: YonSei University, 1971), 76-77; E. Brown, *The Reformed Spirituality of the Korean Christians* (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 1997), 50.

Korea, but they also initiated the enhancement of knowledge and enlightenment through education. Thus, most Koreans understood that becoming a church member meant the acceptance of advanced technology, civilization and culture, or joining the process of enlightenment.<sup>147</sup> In other words, “the profound social structural developments that characterized the process of economic development provided a cultural opening for the ‘selling’ and ‘reception’ of a Christian worldview that harmonized with the industrial transformation of Korean society.”<sup>148</sup> This means that the instruction of the early western missionaries to Korea, especially that of American missionaries, may have promoted a spirit of capitalism and modernization.

According to Dae Young Ryu, most of the early American missionaries to Korea were educated people and were from middle-class families who had conservative religious backgrounds and America’s middle-class values. They belonged to mainline Protestant church denominations and mainline mission organizations such as the Student Volunteers Movement. They were able to maintain a luxurious lifestyle when working as missionaries in Korea. They enjoyed imported merchandises such as imported food, european silverware, imported building materials, machine tools, and so on.<sup>149</sup> When Korea queried the benefits of converting from Confucianism and Buddhism to Protestantism, American missionaries answered implicitly in terms of material benefits and their superior comfortable lives, and invited them to their luxurious houses in order to show their comfortable lifestyle.<sup>150</sup> George

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<sup>147</sup> Chong Bum Kim, “Preaching the Apocalypse in Colonial Korea: The Protestant Millennialism of Gil Seon-Ju”, in *Christianity in Korea*, ed. Robert E. Buswell and Timothy S. Lee (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 149-50.

<sup>148</sup> Hang-Sik, *Eschatology and Ecology Experiences of the Korean Church*, 55.

<sup>149</sup> Dae Young Ryu, “Understanding Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884-1910): Capitalist Middle-Class Values and the Weber Thesis”, *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* [En ligne], 113 (Janvier-mars 2001): 98-99.

<sup>150</sup> Gilmore, *Korea from its Capital: With a Chapter on Missions*, 315-316.

Gilmore illustrates the attitude of Koreans when they visited American missionaries' homes as follows:

They (Koreans) go home to ponder on the religion which takes hold of the present life of man and makes it more enjoyable. They mark our cheerful faces and our enjoyment of life, and wonder at the cause. They listen to the tales of the achievements of Western sciences. The huge cities, the wonderful railroad, the marvellous steamboat, impress them with a sense of the lifting power of our civilization. When they realize that all this is the outcome and development of our religion, the practical value of Christianity makes a powerful appeal to them.<sup>151</sup>

Some American missionaries even introduced and traded western products to Koreans. Moreover, they aroused anger among some western tradesmen, because as well as actively taking part in a commercial market, some American missionaries also snatched customers and stores which tradesmen had opened with great hardship.<sup>152</sup>

Both the Emperor Gojong and his government recognized the fact that the Protestantism in America that the early American missionaries had brought had contributed to bringing the welfare of developed western civilization and modernization to Korea. Emperor Gojong concluded a commercial treaty with the United States of America.<sup>153</sup>

The demographic factor could be one good example of how Christianity in South Korea has played a pivotal role as an influence on decision making in economic development. According to the 1996 *Korean Religion Year Book*, "about one third of

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 316.

<sup>152</sup> Dae Young Ryu *초기 미국 선교사 연구: 1884-1910 (Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884 – 1910): Understanding Missionaries from Their Middle-Class Background*, Seoul: Korea Seminary History Institute, 2001), 217-19.

<sup>153</sup> Gojong's royal order in *The Ri Dynasty Annals of Korea*, 54, *Kojong Sillok II (1875-1888)* (Tokyo: Gakushuin Institute of Oriental Culture, 1967), 202 - quoted in Ryu, "Understanding Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884-1910)": 114.

South Korea's 45 million people are Christians – 12 million Protestants and 3 million Roman Catholics,<sup>154</sup> most of whom were part of the upper and middle-classes and were able to lead a force of national policy and economic development in South Korea.<sup>155</sup> More striking evidence is that even though the Protestant Christians in South Korea merely accounted for 4 per cent of the total population between 1952 and 1962, 32 per cent of politicians were Protestant Christians.<sup>156</sup>

This information leads me in turn to the conviction that it is necessary in the Korean context to study the theology of these early western missionaries to Korea. Not only has the theology of those missionaries shaped the viewpoint of the early Korean Protestant Christians towards the world, but it also plays a pivotal role in the decision making that takes place in all aspects of their life. Thus, the next chapter examines the theology of American missionaries to Korea, focusing especially on their eschatology.

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<sup>154</sup> Jae-Ryong Shim, "Modernity and Religiosity of Korean People Today," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 4 (1991): 165-176.

<sup>155</sup> Hang-Sic Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 55-56.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* 59



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ESCHATOLOGY, PREMILLENNIAL DISPENSATIONALISM, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY IN KOREA**

#### **2.1 Eschatology of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century in America and its Influence on Western Missionaries to Korea.**

In order to find the origin of the indifference of the Korean Protestant Church towards environmental issues, it is necessary to investigate the theology of the early western missionaries to Korea that profoundly impacted the belief system of the early Korean Christians. Thus, it is relevant to study the impact of the history of western missionaries to Korea and in particular the mainstream theology of Christian America from where many missionaries to Korea originated.

##### **2.1.1 Premillennialism (Historical Premillennialism and Premillennial Dispensationalism), Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, and Dispensationalism**

In developing our understanding of the theology of the early western missionaries to Korea, we need to understand both Premillennialism and the alternative perspectives – Postmillennialism, Amillennialism and Dispensationalism – as they all have different viewpoints regarding the end of the world. The first view to be considered in this section, “Postmillennialism”, holds that through the saving work of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel, the vast majority of people in the world will eventually become Christians and the Kingdom of God will be extended across the world.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Timothy P. Weber, “Millennialism”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 367-68.

Moreover, through the subsequent changed character of mankind and new, balanced developments in terms of social, economic, political, and cultural situations enabled by Christians and the Holy Spirit, this world will ultimately be in a state of righteousness, peace, and spiritual prosperity in the *present* dispensation (the Church age).<sup>158</sup> After these conditions have persisted for a thousand years (the Millennium), Christ will return (the Parousia) and reign over this world. This eschatological position is an optimistic one in terms of the course of history and the power of preaching and evangelism because it says that all conditions in the world will be reformed by the end of the world.<sup>159</sup> The important figures who adhere to the postmillennial view are Daniel Whitby, Jonathan Edwards, J. Marcellus Kik, Roderick Campbell, and Iain Murray (among others).<sup>160</sup>

The second view, “Amillennialism”, denies Jesus Christ’s literal and physical reign on the earth. Amillennialism considers the term “Millennium”, mentioned in Revelation 20, to be a symbolic period between the first and second comings of Christ. This perspective therefore holds that the Millennium has already begun. Amillennialists accept the simultaneous continuity of the Kingdom of God and the

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<sup>158</sup> The definition of “Dispensations”: “The dispensations are distinguished, exhibiting the progressive order of God’s dealings with humanity, the increasing purpose which runs through and links together time-periods during which man has been responsible for specific and varying tests as to his obedience to God, from the beginning of human history to its end. Although not all Bible students agree in every detail of the dispensational system presented in this Reference Bible, it is generally recognized that the distinction between law and grace is basic to the understanding of the Scriptures. As a further aid to comprehending the divine economy of the ages, a recognition of the dispensations is of highest value, so long as it is clearly understood that throughout all the Scriptures there is only one basis of salvation, i.e. by grace through faith; and that strict limits cannot be placed upon the terminations of all the dispensations because (1) there is some overlapping, and (2) the divinely-given stewardship may continue after the time-era of special testing has ended”. See, Cyrus I Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), vii.

<sup>159</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 1214-15.

<sup>160</sup> Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), 12.

Kingdom of Satan as entities in this world until the second coming of Christ.

Amillennialists also argue that the second coming of Christ does not mean the establishment of a political and earthly kingdom in the world. Instead, the Kingdom of God was inaugurated after Christ's first coming and it is present now in spirit.

Judgment and resurrection will take place at the second coming of Christ, and the Kingdom of God will exist spiritually in people's minds. Advocates of Amillennialism are Louis Berkhof, Geerhardus Vos, and Abraham Kuyper, among others.<sup>161</sup>

The third perspective, "Premillennialism", can understand the term "Millennium" literally, and holds that the second coming of Christ (the Parousia) will happen before the Millennial Kingdom. There are two kinds of premillennialism: Historical Premillennialism and Premillennial Dispensationalism (sometimes known as Dispensational Premillennialism). The latter (Premillennial Dispensationalism) holds that the second coming of Christ will occur dramatically, suddenly, and literally – with the physical and bodily appearance of Christ in the air – before the inauguration of the "Millennium" (a thousand years), after which he will reign over this world at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Premillennial Dispensationalism argues there will be two occurrences of the second coming of Christ (the Parousia). The first one is called the Rapture. It will take place before the starting point of the seven years of tribulation. Devoted believers, including the righteous dead of all past ages, will leave this earth in order to meet Christ in the air.<sup>162</sup> The seven years of tribulation will then occur, and will include famine, war, the persecution of remaining believers, and the extinction of more than 75 per cent of all creatures on the earth.<sup>163</sup> The second part

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 12, 14.

<sup>162</sup> Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London; SCM Press Ltd, 1977), 190.

<sup>163</sup> We need to identify the differences between the seven years tribulation and the "Great Tribulation".

of the Parousia is the Revelation, which will happen after the seven years of tribulation. At this time, Christ returns to earth “with” His saints, “overpowers the Antichrist, defeats and suppresses all His enemies, raises the righteous dead who have died or who have been killed during the Great Tribulation, and establishes His Kingdom on this earth.”<sup>164</sup> Premillennial Dispensationalism considers this future era to be the time when the prophetic hope of God’s people, Israel, which was illustrated in the Old Testament, will be fulfilled.<sup>165</sup> This eschatological vision has a pessimistic viewpoint towards the present physical world, because it takes for granted that famine, war, and problems in the current predicament of nature (the earth) must occur as part of the process of God’s Judgment.

On the other hand, Historical Premillennialism believes there will only be one time of the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. The Historical Premillennialists believe that all people including Christians, Jews, and atheists must go through seven years of tribulation. After that, the second coming of Christ will occur on the earth; believers will be raptured in order to meet Jesus on his arrival in the air and will then come back down to earth with Christ and live in the Millennial Kingdom, which refers to a transformed version of the current world. They usually do interpret ‘Millennium’ in a literal sense. Thus, Premillennial Dispensationalism has a similar perspective on the catastrophic disaster at the end of the world, including environmental disasters.<sup>166</sup>

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The Great Tribulation means the second half of the seven years tribulation period, see James D. Quiggle, *Dispensational Eschatology: An Explanation and Defence of the Doctrine* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 201-08. Although the majority of premillennial dispensationalists believe in seven years tribulation, some of them claim three and a half years tribulation.

<sup>164</sup> Boettner, *The Millennium*, 16.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>166</sup> Timothy P. Weber, ‘Millennialism’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L Walls, 365-

Dispensationalism more broadly is a system of Bible interpretation and framework for understanding history. Dispensationalism typically divides human history into three, four, seven, or eight distinct periods, or “dispensations”. John N. Darby and author of the Scofield Reference Bible Cyrus Scofield played a pivotal role in building this theology and spreading it across the world.<sup>167</sup> The basic principle of the hermeneutics of Dispensationalism is literal interpretation of the Bible. This theology of Dispensationalism is that in each period God deals with the human race in different ways on the basis of some specific principles. According to Loraine Boettner, the Scofield Bible divided the dispensations into seven distinct eras as follows:

1. Innocence - the period in Eden, from the creation of Adam and Eve until the Fall.
2. Conscience - from the Fall until the Flood. Conscience is defined as the knowledge of right and wrong, and in this period it became man’s guide...
3. Human Government - from the Flood until the call of Abraham...
4. Promise - from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Special promises were given at this time to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses...
5. Law, from the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai through most of the public ministry of Christ...
6. Grace - from the closing days of the public ministry of Christ until the Second Coming. This is the period of the Church. It is free from Law as a means of salvation, and people/believer live

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<sup>167</sup> The *Scofield Reference Bible* was very popular in the early twentieth century. It contained a commentary on biblical passages alongside the Bible text, and was annotated by Cyrus I. Scofield who was an American theologian, minister, and an important figure in the spread of Premillennial Dispensationalism across the world. This Bible was published shortly after World War I, which was an event that changed people’s viewpoints on their future from an optimistic one to one of pessimism. “The *Scofield Reference Bible* promoted dispensationalism, the belief that between creation and the final judgment there would be seven distinct eras of God’s dealing with man and that these eras are a framework for synthesizing the message of the Bible. It was largely through the influence of Scofield’s notes that dispensationalism grew in influence among fundamentalist Christians in the United States.” According to John D. Hannah, there was no more influential source than the *Scofield Reference Bible* for introducing and diffusing Premillennial Dispensationalism. See, John D. Hannah, “Cyrus. I. Scofield”, *Dictionary of Christianity of America*, (1990), 1058; James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 191. Korean Christians are still using this Bible, and this book is very popular in South Korea. See B.M. Pietsch, *Dispensational Modernism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 173-95.

exclusively in the realm of Grace.

7. Kingdom - the Millennium, a one thousand year period, from the return of Christ until the end of His reign on earth.<sup>168</sup>

The second coming of Christ (the Parousia) in Dispensationalism will occur before the Millennium. Dispensationalists are Premillennialists who affirm a future, literal thousand-year reign of Christ which merges with and continues on to the eternal state in the “new heavens and the new earth.” Dispensationalists consider that God has different and distinct plans for the nation of Israel and for the Church. The Church in Dispensationalism refers to faithful believers. The Church will be secretly raptured from the earth in order to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). Moreover, Dispensationalists hold that all the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the nation of Israel will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom, and that the nation of Israel will rule over the world at the end of the tribulation as fulfilment of God’s promise towards the earthly Israel.<sup>169</sup> Thus, in short, as a combined form of Dispensationalism and Premillennialism, Premillennial Dispensationalism not only believes God has different plans for the nation of Israel and the church, but it also believes in the double second coming of Christ and the Millennial Kingdom being established at the point of this final second coming (Revelation). Horrell encapsulates Premillennial Dispensationalism as follows:

In this view, history is divided into various phases, or divine dispensations, and will culminate in a great tribulation, a battle between good and evil (Armageddon), and a millennial reign of Christ on the earth. Prior to the tribulation, however, Christians will

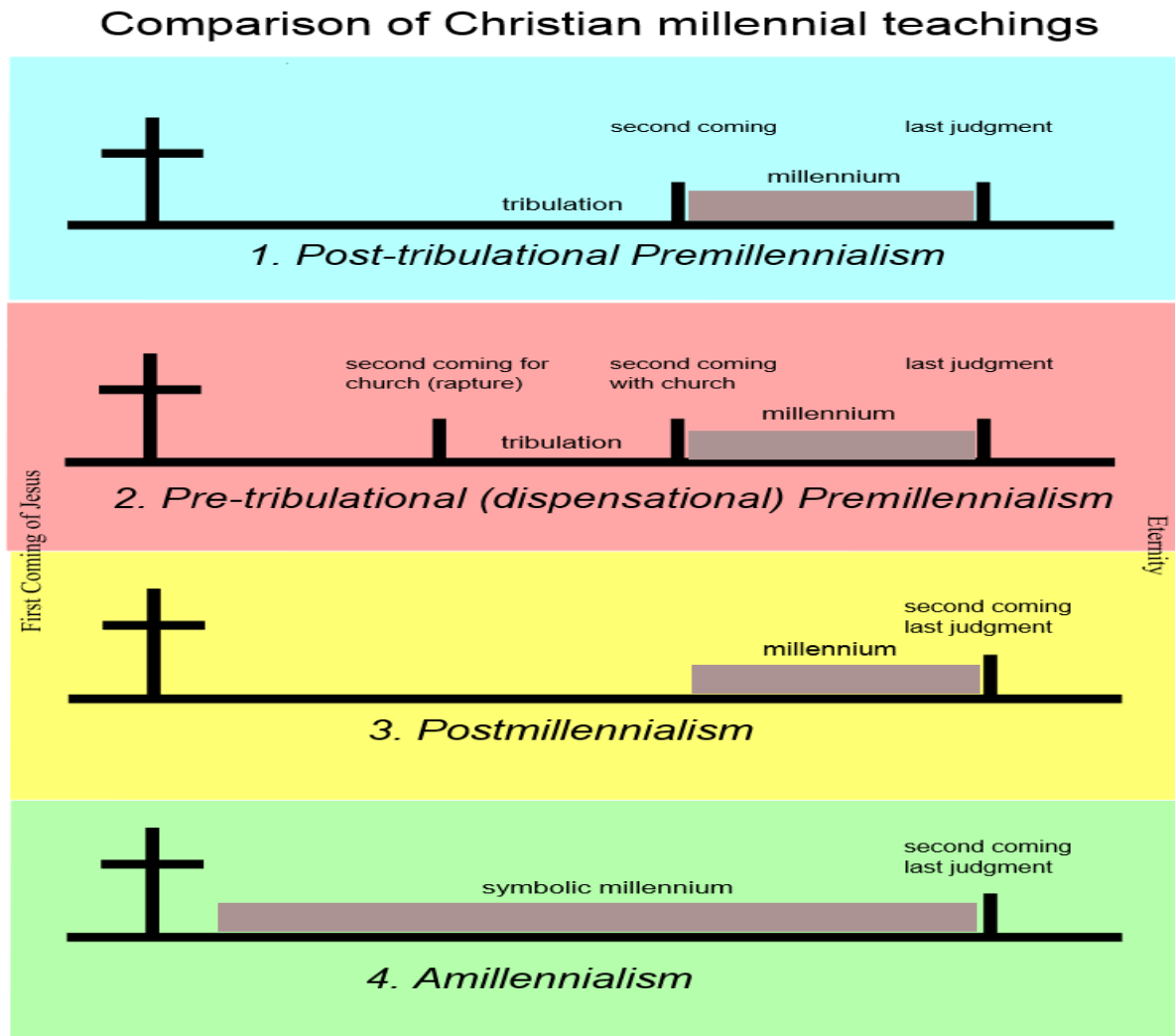
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<sup>168</sup> Boettner, *The Millennium*, 150.

<sup>169</sup> Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 191-94; Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 189. See the ‘Dispensational Concept of Israel and Church’ section of this thesis for a more detailed expression of Dispensationalism.

be raptured from the earth.<sup>170</sup>

These various millennial teachings can be more easily understood via the following chart:<sup>171</sup>



### 2.1.2 The Theological Background of the Early Western Missionaries to Korea

When the early western missionaries came to Korea, there was a serious debate between fundamentalism and liberalism (modernism) in western societies, particularly

<sup>170</sup> David G. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (London, Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2010), 16.

<sup>171</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Premillennialism> Last accessed 12 November 2015. The Post-tributational Premillennialism is also known as Historical Premillennialism.

in the United States of America.<sup>172</sup> However, the liberal theology camp did not have a great interest in missionary work. George M. Marsden described this situation as follows:

Mission work was a crucial factor in the emergence of fundamentalism as an organized movement, and long remained one of the most hotly debated issues in both the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations. Conservatism was strong in the mission field and so was dispensational premillennialism. As we have seen, mission had been a positive force for creating a sense of unity among revivalists and other conservative evangelicals.<sup>173</sup>

The early western missionaries to Korea were influenced by this historical circumstance and several other factors such as the holding of the first international conference to discuss Bible prophecy (1868), The Niagara Conference (1878-1897), the Student Volunteer Movement (1886-1910), and the Moody Bible Institute (1886). In particular, the Premillennial Dispensationalism that had become the main eschatological theology in America's evangelicalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was deeply related to these events. George Marsden points out the place where Premillennial Dispensationalism developed:

Fundamentalism [*of which Premillennial Dispensationalism is a part*]<sup>174</sup> did not develop in seminaries, but in Bible conferences, Bible schools, and, perhaps most importantly, on the personal level of small Bible-study groups where the prophetic truths could be

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<sup>172</sup> In particular, after the Civil War in the United States of America, World Wars I & II and the Great Depression caused optimism to collapse and Postmillennialism to decline. As a result, the more pessimistic historical view of Premillennialism became prevalent. See Ung Kyu Pak, *Millennialism in the Korean Protestant Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 51-54.

<sup>173</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 167.

<sup>174</sup> Italics mine; this is inserted because fundamentalism may include Premillennial Dispensationalist theology.



made plain.<sup>175</sup>

The missionary work towards Korea was mainly led by North and South Presbyterian Church denominations and Northern and Southern Methodist Church denominations from the United States of America. Of the 499 missionaries who came to Korea between 1884 and 1910, 77.6 per cent came from these four denominations. The table below shows the distribution of missionaries to Korea between 1884 and 1910.

The Denomination dispatched			The number of people (ratio)		
North Presbyterian	Northern	The United States of America	165 (33.1%)	279 (56.0%)	387 (77.6%)
North Methodist			114 (22.9%)		
South Presbyterian	Southern		62 (12.4%)	108 (21.6%)	
South Methodist			46 (9.2%)		
Australian Presbyterian			27 (5.4%)	112 (22.4%)	
Canadian Presbyterian			15 (3.0%)		
The Episcopal Church			16 (3.2%)		
The Salvation Army, etc.			54 (10.8%)		

Denominations which dispatched the early missionaries to Korea between 1884 and 1910.<sup>176</sup>

An important fact that we should consider here is the influence of the Student Volunteer Movement in terms of sending early American missionaries to Korea. The number of American missionaries to Korea sent by the Student Volunteer Movement

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 61-62.

<sup>176</sup> Dae Young, Ryu 초기 미국 선교사 연구: 1884-1910 (*Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884 – 1910): Understanding Missionaries from Their Middle-Class Background*), 27.

was 94 out of a total of 166 missionaries from 1906 to 1910. The Student Volunteer Movement played an essential part in not only spreading Premillennial Dispensationalism in the United States of America, but also in dispatching missionaries to foreign countries.<sup>177</sup> As a matter of fact, this movement was supported by Dwight Lyman Moody who disseminated Premillennial Dispensationalism in America. According to Arthur J. Brown, a director of the North Presbyterian Foreign Mission department, most of the early missionaries to Korea had embraced Premillennial Dispensationalism as an important truth, and they considered it a dangerous heresy to accept the so-called higher criticism and liberal theology. He argued this point as follows:

The typical missionary of the first quarter century after the opening of the country was a man of the Puritan type. He kept the Sabbath as our New England forefathers did a century ago. He looked upon dancing, smoking, and card playing as sins in which no true follower of Christ should indulge. In theology and Biblical criticism, he was strongly conservative, and he held as a vital truth the premillennial view of the second coming of Christ. Higher Criticism and Liberal theology were deemed dangerous heresies. In most of the evangelical churches of America and Great Britain, conservatives and liberals have learned to live and work together in peace; but in Korea the few men who hold "the modern view" have a rough road to travel, particularly in the Presbyterian group of missions.<sup>178</sup>

Thus, it is clear that most of the early American missionaries to Korea were Premillennial Dispensationalists.

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<sup>177</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 183-187.

<sup>178</sup> Arthur, J. Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1919), 540.

## **2.2. A Brief History of the Dissemination of Premillennial Dispensationalism among Korean Christians through the Early Western Missionaries to Korea.**

### **2.2.1 A Brief History of Premillennial Dispensationalism**

The intention in this section is to explain in more detail the Premillennial Dispensationalist perspective. This is not an attempt to analyse the validity or invalidity of this eschatology, but a presenting of the basic information, such as its historical context and characteristics, relevant to the background of this study.

Although there is controversy surrounding the origin of Premillennial Dispensationalism, whether the starting point was in the apostolic era or the recent era the majority of scholars are agreed that John N. Darby (1800-1892) built the organized theological system of Premillennial Dispensationalism and can be considered to be its father or originator.<sup>179</sup> Since then there have been two important figures in the development of Premillennial Dispensationalism: James H. Brookes (1830-1897) and Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921). Not only was Brookes one of the important leaders of the Niagara Prophetic Conferences but he also contributed to refining and propagating Premillennial Dispensationalism. Moreover, Scofield was a well-known figure promulgating this eschatology by the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909. This volume was very popular, and was the most important method in spreading/circulating Premillennial Dispensationalism.<sup>180</sup> James Barr discusses the extent of influence of the Scofield Reference Bible as follows:

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<sup>179</sup> Most scholars consider that Premillennial Dispensationalism is a modern phenomenon originating from the writings of John N. Darby, who founded the Plymouth Brethren community. See Norman C. Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development* (Richmond, TN: John Knox Press, 1958), 16.

<sup>180</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 176; Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 191.

The influence of the Scofield Bible has been historically enormous. It is said that two million copies were sold in the first generation... The book has thus been subtly but powerfully influential in spreading those views among hundreds of thousands who have regularly read that Bible.<sup>181</sup>

Another significant figure was Lewis S. Chafer (1871-1952). Chafer was the first dean and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, which is considered to be the representative institution for the spread of Premillennial Dispensationalism. He published a book in 1947 in the field of systematic theology, entitled *Systematic Theology* and taking into account a dispensational perspective. This book was considered a standard text book for many seminaries, including the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, as well as for many other seminary students. Dallas Theological Seminary has produced many prominent figures who have advocated this eschatological system, including Charles L. Feinberg (1909-1995), J. Dwight Pentecost (1915-2014), Charles C Ryrie (1925-today), Craig A. Blaising (1949- today), John D. Hannah (1940s - today), Robert L. Saucy (1930-today), John F. Walvoord (1910-2002), and so on.<sup>182</sup>

### **2.2.2 Premillennial Dispensationalism: The Theology of the Early American Missionaries to Korea**

Premillennial Dispensationalism was embraced by many North American evangelicals

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<sup>181</sup> Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 191. This Scofield Reference Bible is popular in South Korea today.

<sup>182</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 177.

in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>183</sup> It is thus reasonable to research this eschatological system.

The important concepts of this eschatological view are as follows: first, the literal interpretation of the Bible; second, the second coming of Christ; third, the subsequent establishment of the millennial kingdom; fourth, the rapture which will occur before the seven-year tribulation, which will be caused not only by the Antichrist's oppression but also by God's punishment; and fifth, the dispensational concept of Israel, which means God has a special plan for the nation of Israel and blesses them materially.<sup>184</sup>

### **2.2.2.1 Literal Interpretation of the Bible**

The most distinguishing feature of Premillennial Dispensationalism is interpreting the Bible as literally as possible, particularly in relation to the prophecies of the Old Testament. Paul Enns considers literalism to be the basic hermeneutical principle of the Premillennial Dispensationalist, saying that:

Dispensationalists follow a consistently literal method of interpretation, which extends to eschatological studies. Many conservative non-dispensationalists interpret the Bible literally with the exception of prophecy; dispensationalists apply the literal scheme of interpretation to all the disciplines of theology. Although the term *literal* may raise questions in some quarters, it should be understood as the normal, customary approach to any literature—the way all language is commonly understood. *Literal*, when describing the hermeneutical approach, refers to interpretive method, not to the kind of language used in the interpreted literature. Literal *interpretation* recognizes both literal and figurative language.<sup>185</sup>

Premillennial Dispensationalists have guiding hermeneutical principles that are based

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<sup>183</sup> Paul S. Boyer, "Millenarianism", in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, ed. Daniel Patte (New York, N.Y.; Cambridge University Press, 2010), 807-10.

<sup>184</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 97-122.

<sup>185</sup> Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2008), 554.

on literalism. The major premise of the literal interpretation of the Bible is that God made the Bible in a common language so that all people who use different languages can understand it.<sup>186</sup> Gordon Clark gives a more detailed explanation of what literal interpretation means:

If God created man in His own rational image and endowed him with the power of speech, then a purpose of language, in fact the chief purpose of language, would naturally be the revelation of truth to man and the prayers of man to God. In a theistic philosophy one ought not to say that all language has been devised in order to describe and discuss the finite object of our sense-experience. ... On the contrary, language was devised by God, that is, God created man rational for the purpose of theological expression.<sup>187</sup>

The first principle of such interpretation is that it is most important to keep in mind the immediate context in order to interpret the Bible properly. The second is that an interpreter should see instances of figurative language in the Bible (along with grammatical considerations) as connected with the historical context. The third is that the New Testament not only unveils the literal fulfilment of the promises in the Old Testament, but it also shows that the special plan for Israel is unlike God's plan for the Church. The fourth is that unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible should be considered capable of being literally achieved today or in the near future.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology*, 554.

<sup>187</sup> Gordon Clark, "Special Divine Revelation as Rational", in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. C. F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1958), 41. (Cited in Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 81).

<sup>188</sup> John F. Walvoord, "Interpreting Prophecy Today, Part 1", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (1980): 6-9.

### 2.2.2.2 The Second Coming of Christ in Premillennial Dispensationalism

This doctrine explains that the rapture will take place before the tribulation. Moreover, Premillennial Dispensationalists divide the process of the second coming into two stages: the second Advent, and the Church's rapture. After seven years of tribulation, the second coming of Jesus will occur for the judgment of the world, and the initiation of the Kingdom of God for the millennium.<sup>189</sup> Millard J. Erickson argues as follows:

The second coming, then, has two stages or phases. In the first phase Christ comes *for* the Church, to remove it from the world. In the second phase He comes *with* the Church, to set up the earthly kingdom, establish His rule, and initiate the millennium.<sup>190</sup>

Moreover, in the point of view of Premillennial Dispensationalists, human history can be divided into the present age and the age to come. This present age is a limited time and is under the reign of Satan. Thus, people who live in this age need Jesus Christ's redemptive work in order to be delivered from this present era. On the other hand, the age to come is considered an everlasting time, due to having no terminus, as well as being under the rule of God. Thus, even though God rules over this present age in principle, the actual ruler of this age is Satan in the view of Premillennial Dispensationalists.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 185.

<sup>190</sup> Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 127.

<sup>191</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 186.

### 2.2.2.3 Dispensational Concept of Israel and the Church

Another central concept of Premillennial Dispensationalism is the distinction between the Church and Israel in terms of the redemptive history of God. In the viewpoint of Premillennial Dispensationalists, Israel has made a special and literal covenant with God. The people of Israel receive unconditional blessings from God, which the Old Testament grounds in God's promise to Abraham and his descendants, regardless of how Israel responds to God in the future.<sup>192</sup> According to Paul Hang-Sik Cho, God has chosen the Church and Israel for completing two distinct plans. Cho argues as follows:

For Israel, the blessings are material and associated with the Earth while blessings for the Church are futuristic and heavenly in nature. This will be most evident during the millennium when Israel will rule upon the Earth while the raptured Church will already be present in the heavens.<sup>193</sup>

In the view of Premillennial Dispensationalists, God will reassemble the people of Israel in order to fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament, such as Isaiah 11:1-11, Jeremiah 16:14-16, and so on. Thus, the contemporary re-founding of the nation of Israel in Palestine is considered the first sign of the final reassembling of Israel before the impending second coming of Christ (Israel's Messiah) with power and glory to reign over the world at the end of the tribulation.<sup>194</sup> The Church, on the other hand, was begun at Pentecost in Acts, and is a temporary expedient that occurred

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<sup>192</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute: 1965), 137-38.

<sup>193</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 183.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* 184.



due to the Jews' rejection of Jesus Christ. Dispensationalists consider the period between Pentecost and the pre-tribulational rapture to be the Ecclesiastical age. Moreover, for Dispensationalists the Church means the saints of the present dispensation.<sup>195</sup> Paul Hang-Sik Cho pointed out the different roles of the Church and Israel as follows:

The notion of Israel plays an important and special role in dispensational premillennialism. Dispensationalists reject the idea that the Christian church is the true Israel or an extension of Israel and the inheritor of the promises. For dispensationalists, Israel's promises of blessings will not be fulfilled, even for Christian Jews because they have become Christians. Rather, all the prophecies given to Israel are literal and unconditional and will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom when Israel will achieve its glorious destiny as a nation.<sup>196</sup>

#### **2.2.2.4 The Influence of the Pyongyang Presbyterian Theological Seminary**

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Korea faced serious crises internally and externally. Internally, it was the time of the downfall of the Joseon Dynasty. This meant that feudalism in Korea was crumbling. Most of the upper classes had accumulated their wealth through ruthless exploitation of the common people and lower classes, before they were faced with the complete collapse of this social system.<sup>197</sup> Externally, the Korean peninsula became a battlefield of western military forces, which tried to occupy the land. There were many threats from western forces, such as the forced treaty (27<sup>th</sup> February, 1876) establishing a diplomatic relationship between Korea and Japan, the War between Qing (ancient China) and Japan (1894-1895), the collapse of

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<sup>195</sup> Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology*, 117-18.

<sup>196</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 183.

<sup>197</sup> Jun Man Kang, *한국근대사 산책 1 권* (*Modern History of Korea I*, Seoul: Feature and History of Thought, 2007), 46.

traditional markets in Korea caused by Japanese merchants, and the Japanese annexation of Korea (1910-1945).<sup>198</sup> Interestingly enough, in many cases, and in various nations, Christianity was considered an oppressive foreign colonial power. It was not the case for Korea. The country (Japan) that had plagued Korea was not a nation of Christianity. “During the sufferings of the Korean people they would often turn to the Church as an outlet for their nationalist hopes. They perceived Protestant Christianity as a force that could help Korea.”<sup>199</sup> Thus, these challenging situations gave a chance for Protestant Christianity to be accepted in Korea. Moreover, it gave a chance for the theology of Christianity to be accepted and to prevail in Korea, especially the eschatology of the so-called “Premillennial Dispensationalism”.

According to Young Gyu Park, an outbreak period of growth for Premillennial Dispensationalism in Korea clearly began with the beginning of Japanese colonialization of Korea in 1910. He claimed that Korean hope for independence was displaced into the next world, a hope of a life after death which promised happiness in the Kingdom of God. In other words, the concept of another worldly Kingdom, one of God, which comes after death, gave a futuristic hope to the early Korean Christians who lived under the oppression of Japan.<sup>200</sup>

In order to find the answer to how Premillennial Dispensationalism settled down as a mainstream eschatology in the early Korean churches, it is necessary to scrutinize the theology of the professors who taught western theology to the early Korean Christians at Pyongyang Presbyterian Theological Seminary, established in 1901. Although they had taught the Bible to the early Korean Christians sporadically from

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<sup>198</sup> Jun Man Kang, *한국근대사 산책 1 권* (Modern History of Korea I), 155-58.

<sup>199</sup> Sang Taek Lee, *Religion and Social Formation in Korea*, 132.

<sup>200</sup> Young Gyu Park, ‘Eschatological Belief of the Korean Church’, in *The Bible and Theology* 27 (2000): 194.

1889-1900, these professors built a seminary during that time in order to propagate the western theology that they had inherited from their western schools, and in order to create a place where they could train the early Christians in Korea. The subjects and professors of the Pyongyang Presbyterian Theological Seminary at that time were as follows:

Subject	Lecturer	Entry date	School graduated and graduation date
General theology and Catechism	Samuel A. Moffett	1889	McCormick Theological Seminary, 1888
Soteriology, Pentateuch	William M. Baird	1890	McCormick Theological Seminary, 1888
Methodology on Ministry	Graham Lee	1892	McCormick Theological Seminary, 1892
Jewish History, Pentateuch	William L. Swallen	1892	McCormick Theological Seminary, 1892
Matthew's Gospel, the Ancient History	William B. Hunt	1897	Princeton Theological Seminary, 1897
Predestination	Charles F. Bernheisel	1900	McCormick Theological Seminary, 1900

(Subjects and lecturers of Pyongyang Theological Seminary in 1903)<sup>201</sup>

The scale of the Pyongyang Theological Seminary increasingly expanded, and the number of enrolled students grew from 138 in 1909 to 230 in 1915. The following figures illustrate how this school had a considerably larger number of students when compared with the students attending Pyongyang Soonsil University:

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<sup>201</sup> Young Gyu Park, *한국기독교회사 2 (1910-1960) (Korea Christian History 1 (1910-1960)*, Seoul, Lifebook, 2004), 33.

Year	Enrolled Students of Pyongyang Theological Seminary	Attending Students of Pyongyang Soonsil University	Year
1901	2		
1905	22		
1906	50		
1907	75		
1909	138		
		50	1912-1913
1915	230	80	1914-1915
		66	1916-1917
		65	1918-1919
		106	1920-1921
		132	1921-1922

(Comparing the enrolled students between Pyongyang Theological Seminary and  
Pyongyang Soonsil University).<sup>202</sup>

As is shown above in the first table, most of the lecturers had graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary, where Premillennial Dispensationalism was taught. Furthermore, the minutes of the tenth annual meeting (1902) of the council of mission in Korea stated clearly that Pyongyang Theological Seminary had a course which taught eschatology. Princeton Theological Seminary at that time also taught both Historical Premillennialism and Premillennial Dispensationalism.<sup>203</sup>

There were fourteen American missionaries who came to Korea in the years from 1888 to 1902. Among them were three missionaries included in the list of

<sup>202</sup> I used two books for this chart: Yong Gyu Park, *한국기독교회사 2 (1910-1960) (Korea Christian History II (1910-1960)*, 32-38; 'Compilation Committee of SoonSil University 90 Years', *승실대학교 90년사 (The History of Soonsil University for 90 Years*, Seoul: A Publishing Department of Soonsil University, 1987), 216.

<sup>203</sup> The Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Council of Mission in Korea (September, 1902), 21-24.

lecturers at Pyongyang Theological Seminary: S. A. Moffett, who taught general theology and Church politics; W. L. Swallen, who taught Jewish history and exegesis of Old and New Testament; C. A. Clark, who taught Homiletics; C. F. Bernheisel; and William M. Baird.<sup>204</sup> Taking this situation into account, Ho-Woo Lee divided the faculty members of McCormick Theological Seminary into two groups: conservative and liberal. The representative faculty members of the liberal group were: Derrick Johnson, who was in charge of Rhetoric and pastoral theology; J. Ross Stevenson, who taught Church history; Andrew C. Zenos, who was also responsible for teaching Church history; and George L. Robinson, who was in charge of Old Testament. Representative faculty members of the conservative camp were: Thomas H. Skinner, who was responsible for teaching systematic theology; Willis G. Craig, who was in charge of Bible history and Church history; and David C. Marquis, who taught New Testament literature. However, when these missionaries studied at McCormick Theological Seminary, the majority of the faculty members stood in a conservative theological position. Moreover, the professors who held a liberal theology could not affect those who came to Korea as missionaries including Moffett, Swallen, Clark, and Bernheisel, because these liberal professors did not have a powerful influence at McCormick Theological Seminary. Moreover, it was at an earlier time, in about 1897, when the majority of liberal faculty members worked at McCormick Theological Seminary.<sup>205</sup> One good example which illustrates the conservative group's theology at McCormick Theological Seminary was Skinner who worked at this seminary from

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<sup>204</sup> Ho-Woo, Lee *곽안련의 신학과 사상* (*Theology and Thought of the Early Missionary C. A. Clark*) (Seoul: Living Word Publisher, 2005), 74.

<sup>205</sup> For more information see Ho-Woo Lee, *곽안련의 신학과 사상* (*Theology and Thought of the Early Missionary C. A. Clark*), 36, 53-67.

1881 to 1892 as a professor of systematic theology. He discussed answers regarding 1102 theological problems and questions arising from the Westminster confession of faith, and the systematic theology of Charles Hodge, a leading exponent of orthodoxy in the Calvinist theological tradition. Based on this information, Skinner was an adherent of the old school of Calvinism. In addition, Willis G. Craig, who was a systematic theologian and taught in the school until 1911, strongly opposed the amendment of the Westminster confession of faith. Furthermore, he argued that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch.<sup>206</sup>

In order to scrutinize the correlation between McCormick Theological Seminary and Pyongyang Theological Seminary, it is necessary to compare the curriculum of both schools. The two seminaries' curricula were as follows:

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<sup>206</sup> Leroy J. Halsey, *A History of the McCormick Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church* (Chicago, IL: Published by the Seminary, 1893), 34-48.

		McCormick Seminary (1888)		Pyongyang Seminary(1920)
Systematic Theology	1 Year	Theology, Apologetics and Inspiration	1 Year	Theology (Catechism, Christian witness)
	2 Year	Pneumatology, Christology, Creation, Human, Sin and Apologetics	2 Year	Humanity and Soteriology
	3 Year	Eschatology, Commandments, Christian liberty, God's grace and Prayer	3 Year	Eschatology and Pneumatology
Biblical Theology	1 Year	O.T and N.T literature Exegesis	1 Year	O.T and N.T literature Exegesis, Introduction of the N.T, and the history of the Old Testament
	2 Year	O.T and N.T literature Exegesis	2 Year	O.T and N.T literature Exegesis, Geography of O.T
	3 Year	O.T and N.T literature Exegesis	3 Year	O.T and N.T literature Exegesis
Church History	1 Year	Apostolic period–A.D 590	1 Year	Apostolic period-Nicaea Period
	2 Year	A.D 590-A.D 1648	2 Year	Nicaea Period-before the Protestant Reformation
	3 Year	A.D 1648-today	3 Year	After the Protestant Reformation
Pastoral Theology	1 Year	Rhetoric (Practice of Exegesis)	1 Year	Homiletics
	2 Year	Rhetoric (Practice of Homiletics)	2 Year	Homiletics
	3 Year	Rhetoric (Practice of Homiletics)	3 Year	Homiletics
ETC				Christian ethics, education, and modern missionary

(Comparing the curriculum of McCormick Theological Seminary in 1888 and

Pyongyang Theological Seminary in 1920)<sup>207</sup>

<sup>207</sup> Gyeong-Hyeon Jo, 한국 초기 북장로교 선교사들과 평양장로회 신학교 ('The Early Missionaries who were Dispatched from the North Presbyterian Church in U.S.A and Pyongyang Theological Seminary, Seoul', Ph.D thesis of Chongshin Theological Seminary, 2006), 112.

According to Jo Gyeong-Hyeon, there are three associations between two schools' curricula. First, the three-year curriculum is similar in both institutions.<sup>208</sup> Second, the names of courses which were allocated were also closely comparative. More importantly, the content of the subjects in terms of theology were very similar. In general at that time, the academic tradition of both schools was not producing scholars with theological expertise but rather making devoted pastors who propagated the gospel to other people. Based on this information, Jo Gyeong-Hyeon claimed that these three similar points were evidence that Pyongyang Theological Seminary imitated and followed the curriculum and the theological direction of McCormick Theological Seminary.<sup>209</sup>

At this point, we should address James S. Gale (1863-1937), who was a lecturer in the subjects of Eschatology, Pneumatology, and the Synoptic Gospels at Pyongyang Theological Seminary for several decades from 1910.<sup>210</sup> He contributed immensely not only to introducing Korea to western countries but also to translating and writing many books – more than any other early missionary to Korea. These included John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*,<sup>211</sup> the Gospels of Matthew and John, the books of Acts and Ephesians, as well as the *Korean-English Dictionary*. In fact, his books had a profound influence on implanting Premillennial Dispensationalism in

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<sup>208</sup> In 1902, the curriculum was a five-year course. It was changed into a three-year course in 1920.

<sup>209</sup> Gyeong-Hyeon Jo, 한국 초기 북장로교 선교사들과 평양장로회 신학교 (The Early Missionaries who were Dispatched from the North Presbyterian Church in U.S.A and Pyongyang Theological Seminary), 112-13.

<sup>210</sup> James S. Gale listened to a sermon of D. L. Moody when he attended University College, Toronto, in 1884. He was deeply impressed by the sermon, and in 1884 he became a theological student at Knox College in Toronto. After four years, he decided to go to Korea as a missionary. See Richard Rutt, *James Scarth Gale and his History of the Korean People* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, 1972), 10-11, 30.

<sup>211</sup> *Pilgrim's Progress* had a deep influence on the conversion of Seon-Ju Gil, who was one of the important figures of the Korean Protestant Church. For a more detailed description, see Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 148.



Korea. For example, in 1913 he translated a book entitled *Jesus is Coming*, written by William E. Blackstone, who was a Premillennial Dispensationalists. It was called *예수의 재림* in the Korean language. He used this book as a textbook for his lectures on eschatology at Pyongyang Theological Seminary.<sup>212</sup> Blackstone had divided human history into seven generations along the same lines as described above in section 1.4.1: the innocent era in the Garden of Eden, the era before Noah's Flood, the era after Noah's Flood, the era before the chosen people, the era under Mosaic Law, the Church era, and the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>213</sup> In terms of the second Advent of Christ, Blackstone mentioned that when this occurs, Christ will appear as God and he will sit on the throne of glory. He will reign over all people with justice and fairness for a millennium.<sup>214</sup> Blackstone clearly defined the meaning of the term "Millennium," saying that "*Millennium* (Latin) is the same as *Chiliad* (Greek), and both mean a thousand years. Both terms stand for the doctrine of a future era of righteous government upon the earth [ruled by Jesus Christ], to last a thousand years."<sup>215</sup> Moreover, he opposed the hypothesis of "Post-Millennialism." As evidence showing that the Advent of Jesus would come before the beginning of the millennium period, Gale designated these seven events: The Antichrist appearing, the Advent immediately following the Tribulation, a persecuted Church, tares and wheat, the literal reign of Christ, order of the resurrection (i.e. the dead in Christ rise first, and the first resurrection of the godly,

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<sup>212</sup>Gyeong-Hyeon Jo, 한국 초기 북장로교 선교사들과 평양장로회 신학교 (The Early Missionaries who were Dispatched from the North Presbyterian Church in U.S.A and Pyongyang Theological Seminary), 137-38.

<sup>213</sup> W. E. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), trans. James S. Gale *예수의 재림* (Hyeong Seong: Joseon Yasogyoseohae, 1913), 238-39.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. 21-22.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. 23. I have added the caveat 'ruled by Jesus Christ' for clarity.

who die in Christ), and preparing for Jesus's coming with prayer.<sup>216</sup>

The division of history into generations and the order of Jesus' coming which Gale emphasized in this book represented the typical scheme of Premillennial Dispensationalism. Gale's argument in terms of eschatology was transferred to the eschatology of Seon-Ju Gil and Lee Myeong-Jik, who were both prominent and important figures in early Korean Protestant history. This means that Gale's teaching at Pyongyang Theological Seminary, and his books, played a significant role in building and propagating Premillennial Dispensationalism in the early stages of Korean Protestantism.

Another important American missionary was William Martyn Baird, who translated the book entitled *Till He Comes*, originally written by James Hall Brooks, and published it under the name of 주재림론 (*The Second Advent of Christ*) in the Korean language in 1922. In this book, Baird insisted on both the rapture of faithful believers and the rapture of the Church. He believed that the rapid progress of secularization is a sign of the last days. Baird classified the history of mankind into seven generations (economies or dispensations) like Gale's division of human history, labelled as: the Innocent era in the Garden of Eden before sin; the Age of conscience, namely the era before Noah's Flood; the Patriarchal time when God spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their friend; the time of Mosaic Law, in which the Law of God was clearly declared to the people of Israel; the era of Jesus' ministry; the Age of grace; and the Millennium.<sup>217</sup> Baird was a Premillennial Dispensationalist. He argued for the benefit of Premillennial Dispensationalism as follows: many people

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 28-56.

<sup>217</sup> James H. Brooks, *Until He Comes* (Ada, MI: Revell, Gospel Publishing Company, 1891), trans. William M. Baird and entitled 주재림론 (KyongSung: Chosun Christian Company, 1922), 136.

believe that the rapture will occur before the Millennium (Premillennial Dispensationalism) and are therefore eager to spread the gospel to people. Thus, not only does this eschatological view not have any harmful consequences for people, but it actually benefits them more.<sup>218</sup> Through these two books, *예수의 재림* (*The Second Coming of Christ*) and *주재림론* (*The Second Advent of Christ*), we can understand the eschatological tendency of Pyongyang Theological Seminary towards Premillennial Dispensationalism. Moreover, the majority of the early western missionaries to Korea believed and taught Premillennial Dispensationalism to the leaders of the early Korean Protestant Church.

There were many books through which the early missionaries to Korea introduced Premillennial Dispensationalism, for example *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*,<sup>219</sup> and *Dispensational Truth*.<sup>220</sup> These illustrate that Premillennial Dispensationalism deeply influenced the early Korean Christian leaders through the teaching of the western missionaries to Korea.

## **2.3 The Influence of the Early Korean Christian Leaders**

### **2.3.1 Seon-Ju Gil (1869-1935)**

Seon-Ju Gil was one of the most important figures in the Presbyterian Church, and was called “the Father of the Korean Church.” He was famous for being the originator

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<sup>218</sup> Baird, *주재림론*, 167-68.

<sup>219</sup> Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (London, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).

<sup>220</sup> Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth: Or, God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (London, Rev. Clarence Larkin Est., 1920).

of the dawn prayer meetings in Korea. He graduated from Pyongyang Theological Seminary as the first alumnus in 1907 and received his theological education from W. Swallen, Graham Lee, Samuel A. Moffett, and W. M. Baird – all of whom were Premillennial Dispensationalists. Among those who affected his thinking in particular, Samuel Moffett was the most vital figure in terms of theology and personal influence.<sup>221</sup> Moffett was the founder of Pyongyang Theological Seminary, and he contributed significantly both to establishing the school's fundamental direction of theology and to translating the Scofield Reference Bible (written from the perspective of Premillennial Dispensationalism) into the Korean language. He supported Seon-Ju Gil's 1907 appointment to become a senior pastor at Pyongyang Jangdaehyeon Church, where Moffett also served as a senior pastor and which was considered to be mother Church in Korea at that time.<sup>222</sup>

In terms of Seon-Ju Gil's eschatological view, it was shown clearly in his book entitled "Malsaehak (말세학)" which means "A Study of Eschatology." In this book, he divided human history into seven eras spanning the creation of Adam to the time of eternal rest with the returning of Jesus Christ: the innocent era in the Garden of Eden; from the era in which Adam sinned to the era of Noah's Flood; after Noah's Flood to the era of Abraham; from the era of Abraham to the era of Moses; from the era of Moses to the era of Jesus Christ; from the era of Jesus Christ to the seven years of

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<sup>221</sup> Samuel A. Moffett served in Pyongyang in North Korea for 46 years as the first Protestant missionary to Korea. He contributed to the creation of private Christian schools as well as to building the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pyongyang in 1901, currently located in Seoul, South Korea. See Jane Lampman, *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 7, 2007: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0307/p14s01-lire.html> Last accessed 15 October 2018.

<sup>222</sup> Jin-Kyoung Kil, *영계 길선주 (Young-Gey Gil Seon-Ju)*, Seoul: Chong Lo publisher, 1980), 121-122.

tribulation; and finally the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>223</sup> He believed, like the general arguments of Premillennial Dispensationalists, that the end of the world was impending, but that before then the believers would undergo the sufferings coming upon the world. He believed in the secret pretribulation rapture of the saints.<sup>224</sup> He even argued that the second coming of Jesus Christ could have happened twice: in 1939 and in 2002.<sup>225</sup> Focusing on this eschatology (the last day of the world and the second coming of Jesus Christ), Seon-Ju Gil led numerous Bible conferences and revival meetings in many churches from 1907 to 1935.<sup>226</sup> According to Ung Jyu Pak, Samuel A. Moffett hoped that Gil would build a Korean society based on his theology. His eschatological teaching enjoyed popularity among many people because it gave them a future hope of escaping from the agony of the oppression of Japanese rule.<sup>227</sup>

### **2.3.2 Ik-Du Kim (1874-1950)**

Ik-Du Kim was a famous person with a powerful prayer and healing ministry who frequently preached eschatological messages stressing the future aspect of the Millennial Kingdom and an otherworldly view of salvation. He faithfully followed the theology of Premillennialism and Moody revivalism. Actually, he became a Christian through a sermon of William Swallen, who advocated Premillennial Dispensationalism and followed the systematic theology of Pyongyang Theological Seminary. Kim studied theology at this school for five years between 1906 and 1910. When he began

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<sup>223</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, “말세학 2” (“Study of Eschatology II”), *Shinaungshanghwal* 4 (August and September, 1935): 10-11.

<sup>224</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, “말세학 2” (“Malsaehak II”): 11-15.

<sup>225</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, 말세학” (“Malsaehak”) *Shinaungshanghwal* 5: 15-21.

<sup>226</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, “말세학 1” (“Malsaehak I”) *Shinaungshanghwal* 4, (July, 1935): 14-16.

<sup>227</sup> Ung Kyu Pak, *Millennialism in the Korean Protestant Church*, 133.

his ministry, the majority of Koreans faced a difficult situation, not only because of the economic crisis generated by Japanese exploitation of the Korean economy, but also due to the Japanese government at that time encouraging the sale of alcohol and cigarettes.<sup>228</sup> He was the leader of revival meetings which were held in 776 cities and towns across Korea. In these meetings Kim performed miracles to congregations of about 10, 000 people, including those suffering from illness.<sup>229</sup> According to Ung Kyu Pak, there were several characteristics of these revival meetings:

First, it was a public crusade. No other meetings or conferences in Korea attracted so many people as Kim's. An unprecedented number of people gathered in any town where his conference was held. Second, his revival conference had a unique prayer meeting, a two- or three-hour Bible class in the morning, a doctrinal study class in the afternoon, and a revival meeting in the evening. Third, it had a unique atmosphere. People say that his sermons stirred the hearts of those who gathered. Although his language was rather direct and harsh, his sermons touched the center of people's hearts. He preached mainly on the love of God, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the power of the precious blood of Christ, repentance, and the coming of Jesus Christ. People were so moved by his sermons that they would praise, weep, and give thanks to God with enthusiasm and excitement. In a sense, Rev. Kim healed the diseases of the body and mind through his preaching. Fourth, divine healing was preeminent. Because of the healing ministry of Ik-Doo Kim, the Presbyterian Church Council changed an article of their bylaws from 'There are no miracles in the post-apostolic age' to 'There are miracles.' It should also be mentioned that in his revival meetings and ministry, Kim also promoted the reform of various traditional customs.<sup>230</sup>

One of the significant reasons for the 20 per cent growth of the Korean

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid. 140.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

Protestant Church in 1921 was precisely this revival movement led by Kim.<sup>231</sup> He preached many times on the coming millennium and the future life, which encouraged a millennial-centred and other worldly-centred viewpoint. His sermons provided Koreans, who were under the social and political pressure of Japanese rule, with a refuge in which to rest. Focusing on eschatology in his sermons brought about a faith in escapism, which meant that people's inclination to escape from the present life emphasized the future point that is Jesus' return as King of Kings. Thus, Kim played a pivotal role in propagating Premillennial Dispensationalism in early 20th century Korea.<sup>232</sup>

Apart from these two important figures, there were other early Korean Christian leaders who propagated a future-oriented millennial kingdom of God, such as Hyung-Nong Park (1879-1978), Yun-Sun Park (1905-1988), Yang-Won Son (1902-1950), Ki-Sun Lee (1878 – unknown), Sang-Dong Han (1901-1976), and Nam-Sun Chu (1888-1951).<sup>233</sup>

### **2.3.3 Orientation of Eschatology of the Korean Protestant Church after Liberation from the Japanese Occupation (1945 – present day).**

The trend of the Korean Protestant Church's eschatology after liberation can be defined via several factors, including the continuous strengthening of Premillennialism

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<sup>231</sup> After listening his preaching, more than 200 people became pastors in the 1920s and 1930s. See Ung Kyu Park, *Millennialism in the Korean Protestant Church*, 140-45.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. 143.

<sup>233</sup> Hyung-Nong Park taught apologetics as a distinguished professor at PyungYang Theological Seminary from 1927 after achieving the Th. M degree at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1926. He advocated Historical Premillennialism with post tribulation rapture. See Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology Experience of the Korean Church*, 149. Yun-Sun Park was an advocator of Calvinism and was a biblical scholar. He graduated from Pyongyang Theological Seminary in 1934 and Westminster Seminary in 1936. His major in these schools was both the New Testament and apologetics. He taught as a professor at BonChen Seminary in Manchuria from 1938 to 1943. See Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 149.

(Premillennial Dispensationalism and Historical Premillennialism), emergence of new heresies, and the appearance of Amillennialism.

Following the end of the Korean war in 1953, many books were published in Korea in relation to Church history, systematic theology, and Biblical studies. According to Young Jea Kim, the books concerning eschatology that were published from the 1950s to the 1980s dealt mostly with the Book of Revelation. He classified books regarding eschatology into three categories: Books translated from English into Korean, domestic books, and handbooks of eschatology. In addition, he mentioned whether or not the books followed Premillennialism or Amillennialism. According to Young Jea Kim, the total number of the books published in that period was thirteen: two volumes of translations, ten volumes of domestic books, and one handbook of eschatology. Among these, nine books interpreted the Book of Revelation and Christian eschatology with the viewpoint of Premillennialism (mainly Premillennial Dispensationalism), and the other four volumes held the viewpoint of Amillennialism.<sup>234</sup> However, the books supportive of Amillennialism only started to be published from 1968. This data reveals that Premillennialism was almost the only eschatology that Koreans knew and believed until 1968.

The first book to appear in 1968 that introduced Amillennialism was by Korean Presbyterian pastor Seung Gon Kim, and entitled *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (요한계시록 강해). In this book, Seung Gon Kim argued for the necessity of Amillennialism in Korean Christian society as follows:

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<sup>234</sup> Young Jea Kim, *되돌아보는 한국기독교* (*Looking Back Korean Church and Theology*) (Seoul: HapDong Theological Seminary, 2008), 428.



Continually, the majority of Korea pastors and believers have believed in premillennial dispensationalism. We can find in its origin from the early western missionaries and their eschatology a so-called premillennial dispensationalism. However, today there are a lot of qualified theologians around the world who follow Amillennialism. The representative theologians are a famous systematic theologian Louis Berkhof who was a professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, Dr. Floyd E. Hamilton, Dr. Robert Strong who was a pastor of Southern Presbyterian Church in USA, and Dr. George L. Murray. I heard and learnt premillennialism from my childhood and I taught the Book of Revelation with premillennialism's position to a congregation at local church when I became a pastor. However, while I studied the Book of Revelation I found the contradiction of premillennialism. Now I follow Amillennialism.<sup>235</sup>

However, Amillennialism did not attract sufficient support from the Korean Protestant Church until the 1980s. Only a few scholars, in particular Bock Yoon Shin (1926-2016) who taught systematic theology at Chongshin University in the 1970s and at Hapdong Theological Seminary in the 1980s, taught Premillennialism with Amillennialism. After that, most of the theological schools and seminaries in South Korea started to teach both positions. Finally, the Tong Hap Party in the Korean Presbyterian denomination selected it as their official view on eschatology in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith in 1986.<sup>236</sup> Since then, although Amillennialism co-exists with Premillennialism (Historical Premillennialism and Premillennial Dispensationalism), Premillennialism still maintains the largest continual impact for Korean Christians. Chul Soo Park gives a chart in his book entitled *The End is Coming* (종말이 오고 있다), comparing levels of support for these three eschatological positions in Korean Christian communities: The

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<sup>235</sup> Kim Seung Gon, *요한계시록 강해* (*Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, Seoul: Jung Uoom, 1984), 343-44. The first edition of this book was published in 1968. After that, it was published several times without a major modification. The English version is mine.

<sup>236</sup> Young Jea Kim, *되돌아보는 한국기독교* (*Looking Back Korean Church and Theology*), 427.

chart shows Postmillennialism to be below 1 per cent, Amillennialism to be about 5 per cent, Premillennialism at about 15-20 per cent, and Premillennial Dispensationalism at about 70-80 per cent.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, Amillennialism also has a negative viewpoint in terms of participation and involvement in social issues, including environmental issues. Sang Taek Lee points this out as follows:

Amillennialism: The Amillennial view emphasises the church and its spiritual identity. There is a tendency to ignore the church's involvement in this world because the church is "spiritual". The amillennial teaching contributed to the church's non-involvement, except in the area of evangelism. After Korea's liberation from Japan this idea was popular with many leaders, as they sought to protect the church from the dangers of political involvement.<sup>238</sup>

Thus, Amillennial teaching is inclined to neglect the earthly dimension of the Kingdom of God. Instead, it seems to not only limit salvation as involving another-worldly eternal life, but also to give the impression of emphasizing individual prosperity, along with an indifference towards eschatology itself, by interpreting biblical prophecies in a symbolic way.

Another eschatological tendency of the Korean Protestant Church that appeared after Korea's liberation from Japan was that of new heresies. As a matter of fact, these heresies mostly came from the misunderstanding of Premillennialism, especially Premillennial Dispensationalism. One of these new heresies that impacted Korean society was the Dami Christian Mission Community. The Dami Christian Mission Community appeared in the late 1980s. This Christian community claimed that the

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<sup>237</sup> Chul Soo Park, *종말이 오고있다* (*The End is Coming*, DaeJeon: Daejeonggan, 1994), 159.

<sup>238</sup> Sang Taek Lee, *Religion and Social Formation in Korea: Minjung and Millenarianism* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), 141.

second coming of Jesus Christ and the rapture would occur on 28 October, 1992.<sup>239</sup>

Janglim Lee, the leader of this mission community, promulgated this impending eschatology with the publication of a book entitled *Prepare for the Coming Future* (다가오는 미래를 대비하라) in 1988.<sup>240</sup> This eschatology wielded a strong influence over many congregations and churches. Over 200 churches, including the headquarters of the Dami Mission Institution, the Davera Mission Church, and the Sanctification Mission Church, came under the influence of the Dami Christian Mission Community. This community had over eighty agents all over the world, including in America, Japan, the Philippines, and Australia, and had over 20,000 members world-wide. Many people crowded at the Dami Christian Mission Community, having liquidated all their property as well as abandoned their careers in order to prepare for their rapture.<sup>241</sup> Choe Sam Gyeong illustrated the situation at that time as follows:

The Korean Christian Church is undergoing severe suffering because of the movement of the Dami Christian Mission Community. It is not difficult to meet people those who proclaim impending Rapture and distribute flyer sheets at many bus stations, subway stations, gateways of shopping centers and so on. Now, the issue of this movement has gone beyond just being a church issue and has been sparked as a social issue. Not only TV programs but also all newspapers are dealing with this movement.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Mission Department of Dami Mission Church, *당신은 도적같이 오실 예수님을 기다리고 계십니까?* (*Are you Waiting for Jesus Christ Who Will Come Here in Secret?*, Seoul: Dami Mission Community, 1992), 53-61.

<sup>240</sup> Jang-Lim Lee, *다가오는 미래를 준비하라* (*Prepare for the Coming Days*, Seoul: Dami Mission Community, 1988).

<sup>241</sup> Chang Gyun Mok, “임박한 종말론의 실제” (“Reality of the impending Eschatology”, in *Light and Salt* 28 (October, 1992): 143-47.

<sup>242</sup> Sam Gyeon Choe, *Does Impending Eschatology have a Biblical Viewpoint?* (Seoul: YejangtongHapse, 1991), 11-12.

The impending eschatological movement that plunged Korean society into chaos finished with the non-occurrence of the rapture on 28 October, 1992. Finally, the Korean government actively intervened within this movement and on 25 September, 1992, leader Lee Janglim was arrested for fraud and violation of foreign exchange management.<sup>243</sup>

Cap Chin Cho, a professor of the New Testament at Seoul Theological University, drew the conclusion that the chief factors in the incident were misinterpretation of the Bible and a misunderstanding of eschatology, and the fact that a misguided date calculation was incurred in line with focusing on Premillennial Dispensationalism.<sup>244</sup> The appearance of these heresies that occurred through the negative impact of Premillennialism – in particular Premillennial Dispensationalism – set some Korean people against Premillennialism, and presented an opportunity to adopt Amillennialism. Thus, eschatological beliefs among Korean Protestants today are mainly comprised of a co-existence between Premillennialism and Amillennialism.

## **2.4 Ecological Shortcomings of Premillennial Dispensationalism**

### **2.4.1 A Pessimistic Attitude about the Future**

One of the problems with Premillennial Dispensationalism is its pessimistic view toward the future of human history and social conditions. Premillennial Dispensationalists assert that social conditions will deteriorate in this present

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<sup>243</sup> See the 국민일보 (“Kookmin Ilbo”) newspaper, October 14, 1992.

<sup>244</sup> Cap Chin Cho, “사중복음과 신약성경-이장림운동 비판과 한국성결교회 재림론”, (Four Fold Gospel and the New Testament – a Critique of a Movement of Lee Janglim and the Eschatology of The Holiness Church in Korea), in *성결교회와 역사* (*The Holiness Church and its History* 6 (2005): 71-122.

dispensation.<sup>245</sup> Martin E. Marty points out this pessimism of dispensational eschatology, saying that:

Dispensational Premillennialism says in effect that the Churches cannot do much about nagging social issues of the day. The only substantial change in history will occur with the Second Coming of Christ, after which apocalyptic change a millennium, or thousand-year reign of peace and justice, will come about.<sup>246</sup>

In addition, Harold Hoehner, who was a biblical scholar at Dallas Theological Seminary, indicated such pessimistic fatalism when he criticized Christians who participated in social movements in order to transform social problems. He commented on this as follows: "I think the whole thing is wrong-headed... I just can't buy their basic presupposition that we can do anything significant to change the world. And you can waste an awful lot of time trying."<sup>247</sup> Furthermore, Paul Hang-Sik Cho mentions how dangerous this eschatological system could be:

Pessimistic fatalism ... means that social conditions are irreversibly deteriorating in a given historical period. This deterioration is inevitable and perhaps even predetermined by God. The slide to Armageddon may be the very plan of God. Humans, including members of the church, are powerless to halt their eventual demise and may be powerless even to slow the decline.<sup>248</sup>

As shown above, Premillennial Dispensationalists believe in the

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<sup>245</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 189.

<sup>246</sup> Martin E. Marty, *Protestantism in the United States: Righteous Empire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1986), 248.

<sup>247</sup> Harold Hoehner, "Is Christ or Satan Ruler of This World?" *Christianity Today* 34 (5 March 1990): 43.

<sup>248</sup> Paul Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 192.

powerlessness of human action to halt evil and injustice in society. Moreover, D. L. Moody, who was one of the leading figures of Premillennial Dispensationalism, not only described the world as a “wrecked vessel” but also human history as “getting darker and darker,” saying:

I look on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a life-boat, and said to me, “Moody, save all you can.” God will come in judgment, and burn up this world, but the children of God don’t belong to this world; they are in it, but not of it, like a ship in the water. This world is getting darker and darker, its ruin is coming nearer and nearer; if you have any friends on this wreck unsaved you had better lose no time in getting them off.<sup>249</sup>

The pessimistic tendency of premillennial dispensationalists toward social problems and the future of human history makes Christians feel less responsible for social transformation and especially for preserving and protecting the environment.

#### **2.4.2 The Rapture (Eco-unfriendly Eschatology)**

One of the most problematic features of the eschatology of Premillennial Dispensationalism is the concept of the rapture, because it contains the seeds for a pessimistic way of life focused on escapism. Most proponents of the rapture understand it as a way out of a collapsing world, a hiding place from the coming storm. Thus, this makes people indifferent towards social problems and issues such as leaking nuclear power plants, the population explosion, widespread hunger, global warming, and ecological disasters. For example, when Grace Halsell asked a man who was a rapture believer in the Premillennial Dispensationalist sense about his

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<sup>249</sup> D. L. Moody, “Return of Our Lord,” in *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900: An Anthology*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 185.

feelings on living in the midst of political, economic, and environmental threats to the world, he responded with a simple answer: “I heard Falwell sum up his reason why a nuclear Armageddon would not bother him. ‘You know why I’m not worried? He said. ‘I ain’t gonna be here.’”<sup>250</sup> As such, the concept of the rapture within Premillennial Dispensationalism has laid the groundwork for the indifference of many American Christians, as well as many Korean Christians, when it comes to social issues – including the environmental crisis. Moreover, Premillennial Dispensationalism holds that it is a part of God’s plan that ecosystems will be destroyed and that believers will be saved in the rapture, before the horror of the final ecological catastrophes at the end of the world.<sup>251</sup> Unfortunately, the early Korean Christians received this theology from the missionaries who came to Korea, and now this form of theology continues in Korean religious society to this day. It becomes clear, therefore, that this understanding of eschatology through the lens of Premillennial Dispensationalism thus far is one of the culprits in causing the apathy of Korean Protestant Christians towards environmental issues today.

### **2.4.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the socio-systematic-historical context of Korean Protestantism and focused on the eschatological orientation and Premillennial Dispensationalism of the Korean churches and continuing tradition of these positions in Korean Protestantism today. Premillennial-dispensational eschatology has deeply influenced Korean history and Korean Protestantism. Korean Protestantism grew tremendously through the work of passionate western missionaries, especially

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<sup>250</sup> Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Westport: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1986), 39.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

American missionaries who had strongly believed in Premillennial Dispensationalism and in a fundamentalist and literal interpretation of the Bible. They passed on the eschatology of Premillennial Dispensationalism to the first Korean Protestant leaders, and built many theological schools in order to teach their western missionary theology.

The two historical and nationally painful tragedies – the thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1940, and the Korean War (1950-1953) – played decisive roles in making the Premillennial-dispensational eschatology acceptable to the early Korean Church congregation, because this eschatology, which emphasizes individual salvation, otherworldly rapture, and imminent Parousia, provided some futuristic hope to the early Korean protestant Christians who endured painful and difficult social-political situations.

Premillennial Dispensationalism is an eschatology that today cannot properly engage in social agendas such as global warming and the ecological predicament, because it rationalizes that the ecological predicament belongs to an unchangeable and predetermined plan of God. Not only can human beings not alleviate any social and environmental problems, but Church believers do not have to be afraid of environmental cataclysm, for the rapture will provide their salvific escape.

Premillennial Dispensational eschatology has a pessimistic point of view on human history. Thus, it is not too much to say that the miraculous growth of Korean Protestantism has not only been based on this strong otherworldly-pessimistic eschatology, it also has powerfully affected the mainline Korean Protestant world view of issues concerning animals, plants, and the Earth itself.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, it is highly important to be aware of one's own social-historical context in order to do ecological hermeneutics.



Horrell states that understanding of historical context and theological tradition are important for proper interpretation of the Bible.<sup>252</sup> Through this study on the historical-theological context of Korean Protestantism, we finally see why mainline Korean Protestantism does not enthusiastically engage in the ecological agenda, ignoring issues such as environmental concerns and Global Warming. Addressing the historical-social context of Korean Protestantism contributes to knowing and understanding its background. This provides a good starting point for building ecological hermeneutics for Koreans as well as for Christians around the world. In the following chapter, we turn to examine the interpretive tradition of the Bible in Korean Protestant society. Especially, the following chapter contains to focus primarily on the Premillennial Dispensationalists' perspective and the interpretation of specific biblical texts from that perspective, as well as raising critical questions about it and illustrating the possibility of alternatives.

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<sup>252</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 125.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Eschatological Visions of the New Testament through the Hermeneutics of Premillennial Dispensationalism**

The eschatological vision of the earth has become a major topic in biblical studies. One of the reasons is that biblical eschatology has implications not only for the destiny of humanity, but also for all creatures living on the earth. Some eschatological texts in the Bible seem to depict a catastrophic end of the earth (Mk. 13:24-27; 2 Pet. 3:1-13), while others do not (Rom. 8:19-23; Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5). Unfortunately, some Christian groups tend to take the destruction of nature for granted.

From the brief history of the Korean Protestant Church given in the first and second chapters, it seems quite obvious that the eschatological orientation of this Church has been shaped by certain theological presumptions in Premillennial Dispensationalism. This means that the theological concepts, propositions, ideas, and themes of a certain eschatological position on Premillennial Dispensationalism wield strong influence in shaping certain viewpoints for the world of biblical scholars and some Christian groups in Korea. In fact, as is mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, certain doctrinal constructs form a kind of “two-way lens, which shapes and focuses the biblical traditions – bringing certain themes into clear and central focus, blurring, distorting, or marginalizing others – and at the same time both reflects and shapes our understanding of, and response to, the contemporary context.”<sup>253</sup> These doctrinal constructs not only shape the way South Koreans view nature, but also shape the way they read the Bible and place certain biblical texts at the centre of their eschatology. In this regard, the negative and pessimistic positions of doctrinal

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<sup>253</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 122.

constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism towards nature not only exert influence on the South Korean church's viewpoint towards nature, but also emphasise certain biblical texts which seem to advocate that these doctrinal constructs should be the main and centralised ideas and that others should be minimized. This theological and interpretive tradition is maintained continually in the Korean Protestant Church.

In this chapter, I will present this particular set of the main doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism and elucidate how they shape the tradition of biblical interpretation in South Korea. Moreover, I will read and interpret the key biblical text that Korean Protestant churches emphasize when they envisage the eschatological vision of the New Testament – that is, 1 Thess. 4:13–18. These verses are the only eschatological texts in the New Testament which reveal the so-called “Rapture of a believer before the tribulation.” Premillennial Dispensationalists focus on the redemption of faithful believers from this wicked world precisely on the basis of 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Thus, their interpretation of this text not only contributes to potentially undesirable consequences for environmental ethics, but also explains how the idea of rapture has seriously affected the Korean Protestant Church.

In the following chapter, continuing this theme, I will examine Rev. 6-16 through the lens of Premillennial Dispensationalism, with this text being another example of the influential eschatological texts that have shaped the way Korean Christians understand New Testament eschatology. Other texts, such as Mark 13 and 2 Peter, are also important and influential for the Korean Christian Church, but I have selected Rev. 6-16 as a key example: it represents a total destruction of the ecosystem. This will further illustrate the reading of Premillennial Dispensationalists and how it has affected the Korean Protestant Church as regards shaping Christian attitudes towards

nature. All the doctrinal constructs discussed are closely related to each other.

### 3.1 The Doctrinal Constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism

There are several main doctrinal constructs in the Premillennial Dispensationalism of the South Korean Church which are based on the eschatological orientation of Premillennial Dispensationalism. As shown previous chapter, the basic interpretive method of the Bible for Premillennial Dispensationalism is a literal interpretation. However, despite the claim to literalism, interpretation and selection of certain ideas and doctrinal constructs do take a central place, which then shape the reading and interpretation of the Bible. In other words, this literal interpretation still involves interpreting, shaping, and prioritizing the texts a particular way. This in turn means that certain key ideas in Premillennial Dispensationalism have shaped the interpretation of the Bible. The following outlines the ideas, keys, and doctrinal constructs which play a pivotal role in shaping the interpretive tradition of Premillennial Dispensationalism.

#### 3.1.1 *The First Principle: Rapture*

In the Bible, there is actually no direct reference to ‘rapture.’ However, the Premillennial Dispensationalists claim that 1 Thessalonians 4:17<sup>254</sup> indicates this concept. They took the Latin word from the Vulgate translation ‘*rapturo*’ which translates into English as ‘rapture.’ James D. Quiggle illustrates the usage of ‘rapture’ as follows:

Jesus’ return for the Church is known in dispensational eschatology as the

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<sup>254</sup> ‘ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἁρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἔσόμεθα’ (1Th. 4:17 BGT). In NRSV version: ‘Then we who are alive, who are left, will be **caught up** in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever’.

rapture of the Church which takes place before the Tribulation period. The word “rapture” is from the Latin *rapio*, to snatch to oneself, to seize hastily, used in the Latin (Vulgate) version to translate the Greek word *hárpozō* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, “to snatch away,” which most versions translate “caught up.”<sup>255</sup>

Thus, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the fundamental passage which confirms the rapture concept in the Bible to the Premillennial Dispensationalists. According to Scofield, rapture will happen before tribulation, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then they and faithful believers who are alive at that time will be caught up in the air and meet Jesus Christ, and all of them will participate in a heavenly banquet with Jesus Christ lasting for seven years, while all creatures, including nature, on the earth experience great tribulation and the reign of the Anti-Christ.<sup>256</sup> Finally, after these catastrophic events, the Parousia will happen and all faithful survivors and true believers will live forever in the new world. This means believers will be rescued from the entire tribulation or half the tribulation period. However, such a situation means “the experience of unbelievers in death is one of conscious suffering in Hades until their resurrection at the end of the millennium to face the final judgement.”<sup>257</sup> Thus this doctrinal construct ‘rapture’ can be regarded as a resource through which to build a hope of escape for the believer from the dark future of the earth. Let me quote this point by David Jeremiah by way of explanation:

Night is coming ... a darkness that will cover this globe in suffering and sorrow such as we have never known. But we must not sit and wring our hands about the state of the world. God has provided a way to escape the coming night. Now

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<sup>255</sup> James D. Quiggle, *Dispensational Eschatology, An Explanation and Defense of the Doctrine* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 96.

<sup>256</sup> Cyrus I Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, 1292, 1359.

<sup>257</sup> Craig A. Blaising, “God’s Plan for History: The Consummation” in *Dispensationalism and the History of Redemption: A Developing and Diverse Tradition*, edited by D. Jeffrey Bingham (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 199. The New Testament texts which are related to such ideas are Lk.16:22-26; 2 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 20:12-15.

is the time to tell everyone about the hope of a brand new world waiting for us.<sup>258</sup>

In other words, this doctrinal construct of 'rapture' justifies the lack of engagement of Christians with social issues, including the environmental predicament. The effect of such a doctrinal construct is present among Korean Christians. This doctrinal construct not only shapes dualistic binaries between Church and world, but it also leads Korean Christians to not engage in or to ignore social issues, such as the human destruction of ecosystems and economic injustice.<sup>259</sup> For example, they have constructed multiple types of building for certain church events in mountains and seaside areas without consideration of the environmental impact.<sup>260</sup> Korean Christian communities have been apathetic and disengaged in terms of ethical duties towards nature.

### **3.1.2 The Second Principle: The Irreversible Fate of the Earth**

According to Premillennial Dispensationalists, the future of the earth is pre-determined by God. To be more specific, the ecosystems will be demolished before the Parousia. This means that the current era is one in which tribulation is expected, including for ecosystems. Daniel Wojcik explains the unalterable fate of the earth according to Premillennial Dispensationalism as follows:

... dispensationalist prophecies of a precise doomsday scenario ... express the view that human history is unfolding according to a divine end times plan. ... the predictions of dispensationalists, who say that the end of the world is imminent,

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<sup>258</sup> David Jeremiah and C. C. Carlson, *Escape the Coming Night* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 12.

<sup>259</sup> Seung Gap Lee, "The Hope of the Earth: A Process Eco-eschatology for South Korea", in *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn., edited by Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller, Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquia (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 395-96.

<sup>260</sup> Seung Gap Lee, "The Hope of the Earth", 97.

inevitable, and unalterable by human will or effort, ...<sup>261</sup>

Moreover, in Premillennial Dispensationalism the current time period is the time to prepare “for a final world calamity resolved only by the personal return of Christ with avenging armies.”<sup>262</sup> Korean Christian communities hold a similar position, saying that “salvation is ultimately God’s work and that final redemption will only come with ‘glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.’”<sup>263</sup> The problem with this principle is that it offers not only a fixed view in terms of the future of the earth, but it also emphasizes the needlessness of peoples’ engagement with changing the future destiny – the deterioration – of the earth. Paul Hang-Sik Cho summarises the view of Premillennial Dispensationalists as follows:

This deterioration is inevitable and perhaps even predetermined by God. The slide to Armageddon may be the very plan of God. Humans, including members of the church, are powerless to halt their eventual demise and may be powerless even to slow the decline.<sup>264</sup>

Thus, from the point of view of this second principle of Premillennial Dispensationalism, the predicament or deterioration of the earth seems to be a sure sign that God’s plan for the last days of the earth is apparently being worked out.

### **3.1.3 The Third Principle: The Incurable Sinfulness of the Present World**

One of the main beliefs of Premillennial Dispensationalism is in an inevitable

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<sup>261</sup> Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 90.

<sup>262</sup> George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1991), 111.

<sup>263</sup> Seung Gap Lee, “The Hope of the Earth”, 399.

<sup>264</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 192.

deterioration of the current world with the passage of time. This means that the social condition of this historical epoch should be one of deterioration. That is, there is no hope for the future of the earth. They believe that “the world was rushing headlong toward moral and social disaster from which only the second coming and millennial reign of Christ offered hope for the redeemed.”<sup>265</sup> The basic grounds for such an idea came from this thought that all people totally and repeatedly fail in every dispensation. Scofield has the same view about human failure in each dispensation:

The purpose of each dispensation, then, is to place man under a specific rule of conduct, but such stewardship is not a condition of salvation. In every past dispensation unregenerate man has failed, and he has failed in this present dispensation and will in the future. But salvation has been and will continue to be available to him by God’s grace through faith.<sup>266</sup>

Moreover, Dwight L. Moody, whose work is extremely influential within Premillennial Dispensationalism, not only described the world as a “wrecked vessel,” but also human history as “getting darker and darker.”<sup>267</sup> Furthermore, Blackstone, one of the Dispensationalists who had a great influence on the early Korean Christian communities, described this present era as “the present evil age for this world of sinners, who are full of unbelief and radically opposed to Christ, His people and His salvation.”<sup>268</sup> According to Sang Taek Lee, Premillennial Dispensational eschatology illustrates the view of the otherworldly kingdom and the hopelessness of the earth as follows:

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<sup>265</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 189.

<sup>266</sup> Cyrus I Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, 3.

<sup>267</sup> D. L. Moody, “Return of Our Lord”, in *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900*, 185.

<sup>268</sup> William E. Blackstone, *Jesus Is Coming: God’s Hope for a Restless World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989), 145.



Pre-millennialism was popular partly because in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the series of crises in Korea fitted well with the idea that this world was beyond hope and would end soon. Pre-millennialism also fits well with the conservative dichotomy between this world and the next, drawing a very distinct line between the hopelessness of this world and the glory of God's other-worldly kingdom.<sup>269</sup>

There is another example of the hopelessness of the present world in Premillennial Dispensationalism as follows:

Dispensational Premillennialism tends historically to read all of the world's signs as negative. The world progresses in a way decidedly hostile to the interest of these Christians, and within the narrative, true Christianity must become increasingly isolated and marginalized. Christians must face discrimination and persecution, the world must become increasingly dominated by evil, and true believers must seem increasingly scarce.<sup>270</sup>

This doctrinal construct forms a major obstacle to engaging in social issues, including environmental problems.

#### **3.1.4 The Fourth Principle: The Impending Catastrophic End of the Earth.**

Keith D. Dyer captured the fundamentalists' idea, saying that "Earth is headed for disaster (sooner rather than later)."<sup>271</sup> This doctrinal construct of the "imminent end of the earth" is the central idea for the understanding of the Parousia of Premillennial Dispensationalism. Premillennial Dispensationalists consider calamitous events, such as the environmental predicament, famines, global warming and the problem of

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<sup>269</sup> Sang Taek Lee, *Religion and Social Formation in Korea: Minjung and Millennialism* (Berlin and New York, 1996), 141. This author makes no distinction between the terms Premillennial Dispensationalism and Pre-millennialism. Thus, I understand the Pre-millennialism in the citation as the designation of Premillennial Dispensationalism.

<sup>270</sup> Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 107.

<sup>271</sup> Keith D. Dyer, "When Is the End Not the End? The Fate of Earth in Biblical Eschatology (Mark 13)", in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, edited by Norman C. Habel and Vicky Balabanski (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 45.

nuclear waste to be omens of fulfilment of biblical prophecy about the nearness of the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>272</sup> For example, in the context of the 'Cold War' in the years 1945 to 1991, which culminated in the threat of a nuclear war in America, Europe, and Russia, Gordon D. Kaufman says that some of them even believed that the heavy armament of America, including its nuclear program, seemed to be a preparation for Armageddon.<sup>273</sup> Moreover, Premillennial Dispensationalists claim there are various prophesied events which indicate the nearness of the Parousia, such as "immorality, wars, the establishment of Israel as a nation, Russian war against Israel, the battle of Armageddon between Eastern and Roman (European) armies, and the rule of Anti-Christ."<sup>274</sup> Kaufman summarizes the fundamentalist position on the future of the earth and gives an explanation for how this doctrinal construct blocks engagement in social issues, including environmental issues, as follows:

Some fundamentalists on the far religious right, following out the implications of the biblical apocalyptic imagery of an earthly holocaust as the ultimate expression of God's sovereignty over history, are apparently willing to go so far as to suggest that a nuclear disaster, if it ever comes, could only be an expression of the purposes of God, hence, any who work to prevent such a climax to human history are in fact guilty of opposing God's will.<sup>275</sup>

Moreover, according to *Moody Monthly*, the explosion of an atom bomb reflects the exact eschatological picture of 2 Peter 3:10, which illustrates conflagration and dissolution of the present world as a sign of the coming of the day

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<sup>272</sup> Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 226.

<sup>273</sup> Gordon D. Kaufman, "Nuclear Eschatology and the Study of Religion", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (1983): 8.

<sup>274</sup> Andrew. J Weigert, "Christian Eschatological Identities and the Nuclear Context", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27, no. 2 (June, 1988): 180.

<sup>275</sup> Gordon D. Kaufman, "Nuclear Eschatology and the Study of Religion", 8.

of the Lord.<sup>276</sup> Thus, Premillennial Dispensationalists believe in the imminent catastrophic end of the earth.

Recently, the threat of the North Korean government posed by their possession of nuclear weapons has become a major issue for the people of South Korea and Japan as well as people around the world, especially in the United States of America.<sup>277</sup> The North Korean government have insisted that they have already successfully finished testing their nuclear missile: “the Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15, its first ICBNs, some experts believe give North Korea the capability to deliver a nuclear payload anywhere in the United States.”<sup>278</sup> In response to this, the South Korean government agreed to have a negotiation meeting with the North Korean government, to be held at the Panmunjom truce village in the Korean Demilitarized Zone in April, 2018. This is the first summit meeting between the South Korean president and North Korea’s leadership.<sup>279</sup> The 140 leaders of Korean Christianity and the Church leaders around the world have hailed this summit meeting. They expect that this summit meeting will contribute to mitigating the threat of nuclear weapons posed by North Korea.<sup>280</sup> Many Protestants in South Korea believe that North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons could lead to a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, they – as well as many media

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<sup>276</sup> Recited in Boyer, Paul. S, *When Time Shall be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 117.

<sup>277</sup> See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/north-korea-testing-nuclear-weapons-170504072226461.html> Last accessed 6 April, 2018.

<sup>278</sup> See [www.nti.org/learn/countries/north-korea/](http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/north-korea/) Last accessed 6 April, 2018. An intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) is a guided ballistic missile with a minimum range of 5,500 kilometres (3,400 mi) primarily designed for nuclear weapon delivery (delivering one or more thermonuclear warheads). Also see <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/29/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-timeline---fast-facts/index.html> Last accessed 26 March, 2018.

<sup>279</sup> See <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/23/asia/koreas-talks/index.html> Last accessed 6 April, 2018.

<sup>280</sup> <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2018/03/07/0200000000AKR20180307172600005.HTML?input=1195m> Last accessed 6 April, 2018.

bodies – consider this war would cause the World War 3 which could finally result in the total destruction of the world.

### **3.1.5 The Fifth Principle: Dichotomy Between Humans and Nature**

The eschatology of Premillennial Dispensationalists focuses on the rescuing of faithful believers from the earth, rather than on the reconciliation of all creation. Premillennial Dispensationalists divide human history into several dispensations based on God's dealings with humanity towards redemption.<sup>281</sup> One of the culminating points of human history will be the 'rapture' prior to or in the middle of the tribulation. This tribulation will include not only the predicament of those who remain, but also the destruction of the ecosystem and the earth. There is no room for interest in or protection of nature in these dispensations. Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate have offered a critique of this eschatological orientation:

We may plausibly consider that a combination of theological tendencies and convictions – the idea of Christ's imminent return, or of a "rapture" of Christians from the Earth, a focus on the conversion and salvation of (human) individuals, and so on – can easily lead to a view in which the rest of creation is, at best, of secondary importance, or at worst, a mere stage for the outworking of the drama of human salvation, destined to be destroyed as the end times approach.<sup>282</sup>

Korean mainline churches follow this theological orientation. According to Seung Gap Lee, this idea of Premillennial Dispensationalism has heavily influenced Korean church members and shaped "dualistic binaries of church and world,

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<sup>281</sup> Glenn R. Kreider, "What is Dispensationalism?", in *Dispensationalism and the History of Redemption*, ed. D. Jeffrey Bingham and Glenn R. Kreider (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 27.

<sup>282</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 30.

humanity and nature, et cetera.”<sup>283</sup> In fact, the starting point of the dualistic binaries of humanity and nature is human superiority over creation, based on Genesis 1:26 and 28: “... Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the all ... upon the earth.”... “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion... upon the earth” (NRSV). Gen. 1:26 is the central text which formulates the doctrine of the so-called *Imago Dei* – the idea that God created only humans in the image of God.<sup>284</sup> For the Premillennial Dispensationalists, this account in Genesis not only suggests the superior place of humanity in relation to other creatures, but it also legitimizes exploitation and domination of the rest of nature (anthropocentric dominion).<sup>285</sup> The Korean Protestant Church has accepted this doctrinal construct, which came from the early western missionaries to Korea, and it has been continually inherited in the theology of the Korean Protestant Church ever since.<sup>286</sup>

### **3.2 Main Biblical Texts in the Doctrinal Constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism: 1 Thess. 4:13–18, and the Book of Revelation (6–16)**

As mentioned above, doctrinal constructs play a pivotal role in the reading and understanding of biblical texts, and lead readers into having a certain view of the biblical texts. The five doctrinal constructs discussed above encapsulate the hermeneutical tools in the Korean Christian Church concerning the eschatological vision of the New Testament. The shaping of these doctrinal constructs in the Korean Protestant Church originates from the early western missionaries to Korea,

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<sup>283</sup> Seung Gap Lee, “The Hope of the Earth,” 395.

<sup>284</sup> Charles Birch, “Preface”, in *The Earth Story in Genesis*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst, 12-13.

<sup>285</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 128-34.

<sup>286</sup> Seung Gap Lee, “The Hope of the Earth”, 395.

who taught and emphasized to the early Korean Christian leaders and their congregations certain key doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism such as rapture, tribulation, and imminent and total destruction of the Earth. These main doctrinal constructs contribute to the prioritization of “both a very particular construal of the meaning of selected biblical texts and a prioritization of certain texts which serve, in effect as a canon within the canon – the rule which determines the reading of the rest.”<sup>287</sup> This interpretive tradition and theological orientation, surrounding the understanding of the eschatological vision of the New Testament has been continually followed by Korean Protestant Churches up to the current period. Thus, I would like in this section to shed light on the influence of certain doctrinal constructs from Premillennial Dispensationalism, particularly the rapture, and the imminent and total destruction doctrine of earth, in the understanding and interpretation of the eschatological texts 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16. To do this, I will first illustrate in chronological order examples of Premillennial Dispensationalist interpretations of the rapture concept found in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, moving from the era of the western missionaries to Korea to the present, in order to unveil how this interpretative tradition has been inherited by the Protestant Church in Korea. In the following chapter four, I would like to emphasise the point that certain doctrinal constructs in premillennial dispensationalism, including imminent and total destruction, wield enormous power in Korean Protestantism by examining interpretation of chapters 6 to 16 in the Book of Revelation.

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<sup>287</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 36-37.

### **3.2.1 Eschatological Visions in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, as seen through Premillennial Dispensationalism.**

#### **3.2.1.a General Description of 1 Thess. 4:13-18.**

Most biblical scholars have agreed that 1 Thessalonians is the earliest book to have been written in the New Testament.<sup>288</sup> Here, as elsewhere, the main aim of the contents of 1 Thessalonians was to address certain solutions to the questions posed by the Thessalonian Christian community. This biblical text concerns the question regarding the relationship between the dead and those who are alive at the Parousia, specifically “whether the already dead are to be included in the resurrection heralded by the return of Christ.”<sup>289</sup> Paul’s conclusion is that “They will be at no disadvantage compared to those who survive until the future coming of Christ.”<sup>290</sup> According to Anthony C. Thiselton, there are several different issues in 1 Thess. 4:13-18:

- (1) Usage of the metaphor “sleep”.
- (2) The treatment of the dead and the living believers in the Parousia.
- (3) The consistency between 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians.
- (4) The use of authoritative language for explanation of eschatological visions
- (5) Paul’s expectation of Parousia in his life time.
- (6) The interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:16-17 based on the doctrinal construct of

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<sup>288</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (London and New York: The Anchor Bible, 2000), 71-77. In general, the earlier date would be around 40 AD, later 52AD See pp. 72-75.

<sup>289</sup> Angus Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics and 1 Thessalonians* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 143.

<sup>290</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 & 2 Thessalonians through the Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 115-16.

“rapture.”<sup>291</sup>

According to Gordon D. Fee, Paul’s conviction concerning death before the Parousia is that those who have died will share resurrection with those who are living at the Parousia. Thus there is no need to be sorrowful for the believers who have died before the Parousia, because there is no disadvantage to them.<sup>292</sup>

### **3.2.1.b Reading the Text through the Hermeneutics of Premillennial Dispensationalism in South Korea**

This section intends to shed light on the continuous impact of Premillennial Dispensationalism on Korean Protestantism by introducing in chronological order the most influential western and Korean scholars, missionaries, interpreters and pastors who have influenced and shaped the Korean Church and who follow the Premillennial Dispensational view. All of them interpret and understand 1 Thess. 4:13-18 through the doctrinal construct of rapture. They all both mention and imply that their rapture theory, source, and ideas are influenced by 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Through this we can thus reconfirm in the current era the powerful impact of Premillennial Dispensationalism and its doctrinal construct of rapture as interpreted from 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

#### **3.2.1.b.i Interpretation of 1 Thess 4:13-18 during The Era of Commencement of Premillennial Dispensationalism (1800 - 1880)**

The most important figure in Premillennial Dispensationalism is John Nelson Darby (1800 – 1882). Darby was an Anglican clergyman. He is not only considered to be

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<sup>291</sup> For more information, see Thiselton, *1 & 2 Thessalonians through the Centuries*, 116-120.

<sup>292</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge: 2009), 164-67.



one of the most important figures in the Plymouth Brethren Church, but also to be the founder of the Exclusive Brethren (a subset of the Plymouth Brethren). Moreover, he is regarded as a founder of Premillennial Dispensationalism. He advocated Pre-tribulation rapture theology and was interested in interpreting the Bible, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation, through a futuristic view. He asserted the correlation between Daniel and the Book of Revelation, saying that these two eschatological texts “should be used to interpret each other.”<sup>293</sup> Even though Darby was British, his theology – and particularly his eschatology – contributed powerfully to the development of American fundamentalism.<sup>294</sup> According to Barbara R. Rossing, there are many people, institutions, and conferences which carry out the important role of popularizing Darby’s eschatology:

Prophecy conferences and radio programs sponsored by Chicago’s Moody Bible Institute and a number of Bible schools elaborated on Darby’s timetable and end-times system. Early dispensationalist promoters included wealthy Chicago businessman William Black Stone (author of the 1878 work *Jesus is Coming*),<sup>295</sup> an avid Zionist, and Lewis Chafer, a Presbyterian who founded the dispensationalists’ training centre, the Dallas Theological Seminary, in 1924. More recent disciples of Darby include the many graduates and associates of Dallas Theological Seminary such as John Walvoord (president of the seminary from 1952 to 1986), Charles Ryrie, and Hal Lindsey, as well as televangelists, Bible school graduates, and many others.<sup>296</sup>

Darby “became a popular preacher in the Bible conference movement, a sort of Chautauqua dedicated to disseminating to lay people the latest eschatological

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<sup>293</sup> Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British & American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 36.

<sup>294</sup> Thiselton, *1 & 2 Thessalonians through the Centuries*, 144.

<sup>295</sup> William E. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908).

<sup>296</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004), 23-24.

discoveries.”<sup>297</sup> Darby insisted the eschatology of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 meant that “Christ would end the present era, or dispensation, of history by an imminent secret rapture of the faithful to heaven.”<sup>298</sup> He gives a more detailed interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 in his commentary entitled *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*:

Now the apostle declares that the dead saints were in the same position as Jesus who had died. God had not left him in the grave; nor would He those who had, like Him, been there. God would also bring them with Him when He should return in glory to this earth. But this was not all. The coming of Christ in glory to the earth was not the principal thing. The dead in Christ should be raised, and then, with the living, should go to meet the Lord in the air, before His manifestation, and return with Him to the earth in glory; and thus should they be ever with the Lord. This was the principal thing, the Christian’s portion; namely, to dwell eternally with Christ and in heaven.<sup>299</sup>

Currently, in South Korea, there are more than forty books on sale which were either written by Darby or which deal with his life and theology. Although Darby’s death occurred almost 150 years ago, his theological influence is still strong in the Korean Christian community.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Wilburn T. Stancil, “The Cultural Adaptation of Apocalyptic Imagery: A Case Study”, in *New Blackfriars* 80, no. 946 (December 1999): 542-551, quotation from p. 544.

<sup>298</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 247.

<sup>299</sup> John L Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible Vol. V* (London: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, 1949), 70. For further illustration of several events Darby mentioned that were to occur after the rapture see *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 84-85.

<sup>300</sup> Here are some of the books by Darby which have published recently in Korea: *빌립보서* (*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Philippians*) translated by Jong Soo, Lee (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2008), *히브리서* *묵상* (*Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews*) translated by Byong Eun Jung (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2008), *영적해방* (*Romans 7 and 8 and Deliverance from Under the Law, as Stated in the Holy Scriptures and Deliverance from the Law of the Sin*) translated by Young Kwon, Moon (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2009), *에베소서* (*Ephesians: Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*) translated by Jong Soo, Lee (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2009), *데살로니가 전후서* (*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible: 1,2 Thessalonians*) translated by Jong Soo, Lee (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2010), *마태복음* (*Synopsis of the*

Another key figure in the development of Premillennial Dispensationalism is Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843 – 1921), a contemporary of Darby. He was “an American Congregational/Presbyterian clergyman, writer, Bible conference speaker, defender of Premillennial Dispensationalism, and editor of the *Scofield Reference Bible*.”<sup>301</sup> He became popular when he published the *Scofield Reference Bible* in 1909 in the Christian Society of the U.S.A. Heavily influenced by Darby’s theological ideas, Scofield advocated Darby’s view of Premillennial Dispensationalism. He insists in several places in his exegesis that Christ will return, according to biblical texts such as, 1 Cor. 15:24 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18. He refers in particular to the rapture in the exegesis of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 as follows: “1(4:17) This central passage on the blessed hope of the Church includes: (1) reassurance (vv. 13-14); (2) revelation (vv. 15-17, setting forth the return of Christ, the rapture of the Church, and the reunion of all believers); and (3) comfort (v. 18).”<sup>302</sup> His reference Bible was translated into Korean by two western missionaries: Horace H. Underwood and James S. Gale. The *Scofield Reference Bible* (스코필드 관주 성경) is still on sale at book stores in Korea today.

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*Books of the Bible: Matthew*) translated by Jong Soo, Lee (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2011), *요한계시록 일곱교회를 향한 예언 메시지* (*Seven Lectures on the Prophetical Addresses to the Seven Churches*) translated by Jung Soo, Lee (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2016), *영광스러운 교회의 소망* (*Lectures on the Hopes of the Church of God*) translated by Young Kwon, Moon (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2011), Young Kwon, Moon, *다비와 친구되기: 존 넬슨 다비의 주요사상 연구* (*To be a Friend with Darby: A Study of John L Darby’s Main Theology*) (Seoul: Brothers’ house, 2012), Jong Soo, Lee, *신학자 존 넬슨 다비 평전* (*As a theologian, John Nelson Darby*) (Seoul: Brothers’ House, 2012), W. G. Turner, *존 넬슨 다비의 생애* (*John Nelson Darby: A Biography*) translated by Byong Eun Jung (Suwon: Christian Book Shelf, 2005). These books are on sale on websites of Kyobo Book Centre and Yes 24 which is the equivalent to Amazon.

<sup>301</sup> *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mal Couch (Kregel Publications, U.S., 1996), 389.

<sup>302</sup> See C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible: Holy Bible; Authorized King James Version* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 1292.

The third significant 19<sup>th</sup> century thinker in Premillennial Dispensationalism is William E. Blackstone (1841-1882). He was influenced by Darby and by Dwight L. Moody. He was also a close friend of Scofield, and an American Methodist and Christian Zionist. Clearly influenced by Darby's eschatological viewpoint, he published several books, including *Jesus is Coming*.<sup>303</sup> This book has sold at least 691,000 copies and has been translated into over forty-two different languages, including Korean. Blackstone claimed that Premillennial Dispensationalism is the genuine eschatology, and that "the Jews had fully developed the doctrine of the Millennium ... in Talmud."<sup>304</sup> Those who opposed the Premillennial view asserted that it originally came from chapter 20:1-3 of the Book of Revelation,<sup>305</sup> and that it is symbolic rather than literal,<sup>306</sup> and thus argued that there were doubts as to its eschatological verity. Blackstone countered this argument by stating that the teaching of the Old Testament and the Jewish Talmud reveal the doctrine of the millennium.<sup>307</sup> He continued to argue the great importance of understanding the differences between the meaning of rapture and revelation. Blackstone argues that "the Rapture occurs when the Church is caught up to meet Christ in the air, before the tribulation... The Revelation occurs when Christ comes, with His saints, to end the Tribulation, by the execution of righteous judgment upon the earth."<sup>308</sup> He gave Enoch's rapture to the air as an example of the rapture of the faithful believers in 1

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<sup>303</sup> Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 158, 191, 202.

<sup>304</sup> Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, 38.

<sup>305</sup> Rev. 20:1-3: <sup>1</sup>Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup>He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup>and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while' (NRSV).

<sup>306</sup> Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, 38.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, 75.

Thess. 4:13-18.<sup>309</sup> He asserted that the apostle Paul wrote 1 Thess. 4:13-18 in order to correct the Thessalonian Church congregation's misunderstanding of rapture and revelation. He points out that "at the Rapture He comes only to meet the saints in the air according to 1 Thess. 4:17. At the Revelation, He comes to the earth, and His feet stand upon the same Mount Olivet from which He ascended."<sup>310</sup> His book, *Jesus is Coming*, was translated into Korean in 1913, and was used as the text book on eschatology at Pyongyang Theological Seminary, which was the first theological school in Korea (see chapter 2 above).<sup>311</sup>

### **3.2.1.b.ii Interpretation of 1 Thess 4. 13-18 during The Era of Inauguration of the Early Western Missionaries to Korea and the Era of the Early Korean Church Leaders (1884 - 1945).**

Central to the dominance of Premillennial Dispensationalist eschatology in South Korea are the western missionaries who taught this theological view there. Key among these teachers are the following missionaries. Firstly, there is William L. Swallen (1859 – 1954), who taught at Pyongyang Theological Seminary from 1888 to 1902. He graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary in Texas, USA, which was considered the main place to teach Premillennial Dispensationalism (see chapter 2 below). His courses at Pyongyang were Exegesis of the Old and New Testament, Jewish History, and the Westminster Confession of Faith. At that time, this school was the only theological seminary in Korea. He was one of the

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Gyeong-Hyeon Jo, 한국 초기 복장로교 선교사들과 평양장로회 신학교 (The Early Missionaries who were Dispatched from the North Presbyterian Church in U.S.A and Pyongyang Theological Seminary), 137-38.

teachers of Sun-Ju Kill, who was a significant figure of the early Protestant Church in Korea. In his book entitled *성경도리* (*The Principles of the Bible*), Swallen pointed out the sequential progression of the second coming of Christ: “This is the sequential process of the second coming of Jesus Christ: Christ will come to the air and raise up the faithful believers to the air. And there will be opened a banquet of heaven in the air. After that, Christ with the faithful believers will come to the earth so that everyone will be judged.”<sup>312</sup> In another of his books, entitled *계시록 대요* (*The Introduction of the Book of Revelation*), he mentioned that the Church (faithful believers) will be lifted into the air and stay there with Christ before the tribulation.<sup>313</sup> He interpreted “the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel (NRSV)” in Revelation 7:4 as designating not the Gentiles, but the Jews who are the representatives of each of the twelve tribes. At the Parousia, Christ will save the Israelites and rebuild his own people intact.<sup>314</sup>

The second main teacher, William Martyn Baird (1862 - 1931), was a professor of eschatology at Pyongyang Theological Seminary, and a missionary belonging to the Presbyterian denomination in the USA. He obtained his Ph.D degree at Hanover College in 1903 and started his missionary work in Korea in 1891. He was a founder of Soongsil University in Korea, which was the country’s first modern university, and he also became the first president of the school.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> William L. Swallen, *성경 도리* (*The Principles of the Bible*, Kyong Sung: Yasokyo Publisher, 1915), 62.

<sup>313</sup> William L. Swallen, *계시록 대요* (*The Introduction of the Book of Revelation*, Pyongyang: Joseon Christianity Publisher, 1936), 70-71.

<sup>314</sup> Swallen, *성경 도리* (*The Principles of the Bible*), 63.

<sup>315</sup> Past Presidents section of Homepage of Soongsil University

Moreover, as noted above, he translated *Till He Comes* (주재림론), written by James H. Brooks, into Korean in 1922, and used this book as one of the main references for teaching eschatology at the seminary<sup>316</sup>. In the introduction of 주재림론, he stated that the reason he translated *Till He Come* was to “let Korean people get to know more about Premillennial Dispensationalism.”<sup>317</sup> In his translation, Baird points out that the task of true believers, who are waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ, is not to reform their own society, but to preach the Gospel to non-believers in order to gain their salvation. This is so that Christ will receive them with respect in the banquet of heaven in the air when his second coming happens.<sup>318</sup> He also illustrates the Christian hope of rapture as follows: “Lord, let us always be aware of guidance so that we can enter the palace of heaven from the earth when Christ appears above the cloud of heaven.”<sup>319</sup> He also says that faithful believers will avoid the tribulations at the end of the world because they will be raptured before they happen. The basic grounds for this is that there is no mention of the rapture in the Book of Revelation from 3:21 until chapter 19. This suggests that during the tribulations, the Church is not on the earth but instead is with Christ in the Kingdom of God in Heaven. In terms of the restoration of Israel, Baird highlights that God will restore Israel’s people and their territory in the Palestine area, based on Leviticus 26:44.<sup>320</sup> Baird divided the history of humanity

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[http://eng.ssu.ac.kr/web/eng/intro\\_a\\_03\\_01](http://eng.ssu.ac.kr/web/eng/intro_a_03_01) Last accessed March 20, 2017.

<sup>316</sup> Brooks, *Until he Comes* (Revell, Gospel Publishing Company, 1891) translated by William M. Baird and entitled 주재림론.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>318</sup> Baird, 주재림론 (*Until he Comes*), 5.

<sup>319</sup> Baird 주재림론 (*Until he Comes*), 64.

<sup>320</sup> ‘Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, or abhor them so as

into seven dispensations: the Innocent era in the Garden of Eden before sin; the Age of conscience, namely the era before Noah's Flood; the Patriarchal time when God spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their friend; the time of Mosaic Law in which the Law of God was clearly declared to the people of Israel; the era of Jesus's ministry; the Age of Grace; and, the Millennium.<sup>321</sup>

James S. Gale (1863 – 1937) has perhaps made the most considerable contribution in terms of introducing both the western civilization to Koreans, and Korean civilization to the west by publishing various books. He taught in the areas of the synoptic gospels, eschatology and pneumatology at Pyongyang Theological Seminary from 1910 for approximately a decade. He translated Blackstone's book, "*Jesus is Coming*," (예수의 재림) into Korean in 1913, and it was used as a textbook for his lectures on eschatology at the Seminary.<sup>322</sup> This book, which advocates Blackstone's view on eschatology, played a pivotal role in shaping the eschatology of the early Korean Protestant Church leaders including Seon-Ju Gil, Ik-Doo Kim and Lee Myeong-Jik, all of whom graduated from that school (see chapter 2 above).

Horace G. Underwood (1859 - 1916) was another significant Presbyterian missionary who came from America. He translated the Scofield Reference Bible, which promotes the view of Premillennial Dispensationalism. This thus suggests that Underwood advocated Premillennial Dispensationalism. This Bible considers 1 Thess. 4:13-18 to be evidence that unveils the secret pretribulation rapture of

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to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God' (NRSV).

<sup>321</sup> Baird 주재림론 (*Until he Comes*), 167-68.

<sup>322</sup> Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, trans. James G. Gale and entitled 예수의 재림 (HyeongSeong: Joseon Yasogyoseohae, 1913).



faithful believers.

Samuel A. Moffett (1864 – 1939), an American missionary to the Joseon Dynasty in 1890, devoted himself as a missionary to Korea for forty-six years and was one of the founders of Soongsil University in 1897. He translated the Scofield Reference Bible into Korean with Underwood, which is considered to be a major contribution to the propagation of Premillennial Dispensationalism in Korea.

Another influential figure in the history of Korean Protestantism – and he is especially significant because he is Korean – is Seon-Ju Gil (1869 – 1935). He definitely believed in the second coming of Christ and the millennial kingdom of Christ occurring before tribulation, as he clearly mentions in the following quote: “Christ certainly will come back and establish the millennial kingdom of Christ. If one carefully reads the Bible, they shall realize how many times the Bible mentions this.”<sup>323</sup> He argues for an imminent Parousia based on the parables of Jesus in the New Testament (Mt. 13:47-50, 24:40-44 and 25:1-13).<sup>324</sup> According to Gil, Parousia will occur five times in human history, and each time will unveil the development of the authority and glory of Jesus Christ. The first two Parousias have already happened: the Parousia as the son of humanity, and the Parousia as the Holy Spirit. The final three will occur in the future. These will be Parousia as a groom, Parousia as King of Kings, and Parousia as a King to judge the world.<sup>325</sup> Importantly, Gil supports the idea of the rapture of the faithful believers at the time of the third Parousia, through which they will meet Christ in the air. In my view,

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<sup>323</sup> Seon Ju, Gil, “말세학 (The Study of Eschatology),” *신앙생활 (PyeongYang: Life of Faith)* volume 5 July, 16.

<sup>324</sup> Seon Ju, Gil, “말세학 (The Study of Eschatology),” *신앙생활 (Life of Faith)* volume 5 July, 15.

<sup>325</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, “말세학 2” (“Study of Eschatology II”), 11.

although he did not explicitly refer to 1 Thess. 4:13-18, Gil was influenced by this eschatological text, as is illustrated by the following quote:

When Christ comes back as a groom, though the faithful believers will be caught up in the air in order to meet Christ, those who lack the faith in Christ will be left on the Earth. It is difficult to express how massive the disaster will be for them. This is because not only will it be hard to hear and be inspired by the gospel due to the ascension of the Church (faithful believers) and the Holy Spirit, but Christ will also pour enormous calamity onto the Earth. So, imagine how miserable the world will be.<sup>326</sup>

Interestingly enough, Gil maintains that only half of all believers in the world shall be raptured, because, according to his interpretation of biblical accounts, this is mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels, in passages such as Mt. 24:40-44 and Mt. 25:1-13.<sup>327</sup> Finally, Gil designated the exact time of the third Parousia as being 1939 or 2002, even though he was open to the possibility of making a mistake about the date of the third coming of Christ.<sup>328</sup>

The second leading Korean figure in the early Korean Church who made a major contribution to the expansion and development of Korean Christianity was Ik-Du Kim (1874-1950, see above chapter 2). Kim believed that the present day was coming to an imminent end and that the second coming of Jesus Christ would happen soon.<sup>329</sup> He preferred to preach about Christian eschatology, including the themes of rapture before tribulation, the second coming of Christ, the Millennium Kingdom and the future life, which encouraged a millennial-centered and other

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<sup>326</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, “말세학 2” (“Study of Eschatology II”), 15.

<sup>327</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, “말세학 2” (“Study of Eschatology II”), 18.

<sup>328</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, “말세학 (Study of Eschatology)” *신앙생활* (*Life of Faith* 1 (December, no print year): 28.

<sup>329</sup> Ik-Du, Kim, *Kim Ik-Du*, 187.

worldly-centered viewpoint.<sup>330</sup> He asserted the doctrine of the immortality of the soul based on a dualistic understanding of humanity. This dualism regarding humans can be seen in the words of this sermon, “The human body has to shrink and age in the process of time because our bodies resemble those of ancestors, but our souls do not dwindle or age like the human body because they resemble the image of God.”<sup>331</sup>

Another influential Korean theologian and educator in the early Korean Church was Myeong Jik, Lee (1890 – 1973). He was considered to be a father of the Holiness Church denomination.<sup>332</sup> In his book entitled *야소교 재림 강화* (*Introduction of The Second Advent of Christ in Christianity*), he not only stated post-millennialism to be heresy, but also that Premillennial Dispensationalism is the true eschatology, and thus he argued for an imminent Parousia.<sup>333</sup> In accordance with Dispensationalist belief, Lee took into consideration the political and economic situation of the Jewish people as a sign that would shed light on the time of Parousia.<sup>334</sup> Furthermore, he points out that the signs indicating the appearance of the Anti-Christ and the Parousia are unveiled when we see the destruction of family order, society, and nations by atheism, anarchism, men and woman’s free

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<sup>330</sup> Ung Kyu Pak, *Millennialism in the Korean Protestant Church*, 143.

<sup>331</sup> Chun Gun, Han, *죽지 않는 순교자 김익두* (*Immortal Martyr Ik-Du, Kim*, Seoul: Biblical Theology Press, 1993), 233.

<sup>332</sup> Myeong Su Park, “이명직 목사의 생애와 사역 (Life and Ministry of Pastor Myeong Jik Lee)”, *Theses of Historical Theology* (Seoul: Korea Evangelical Theological Society, 2004), 257.

<sup>333</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, *야소교 재림강화* (*Introduction of the Second Advent of Christ in Christianity*) (Gyeong Seong: Oriental Mission Group of Christianity, 1927), 1.

<sup>334</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, “그리스도의 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ)”, *활천* (*Hwalcheon* 4, Gyeong Seong: Holiness Church Press, 1940), 26.

entertainment, and ignorance of Hell.<sup>335</sup> The distinctive feature of Lee's eschatology is that, in his book *그리스도의 내림* (*Descent of Christ*), he applies the exact word “휴거” (rapture) for the first time in Korean Christian history.<sup>336</sup> Lee defines the Rapture as follows:

The spatial meaning of 휴거 (Rapture) is bringing someone to the other side similar to crossing a river to reach the other side. A person living on the surface of the earth would be taken away to the beyond, where no aeroplane or bird could reach, after being transformed into an astral body which has no limitation in time and space.<sup>337</sup>

In terms of the theological meaning of (휴거)/rapture, it represents a place of refuge which God prepares in the air for the faithful believers in order to protect them from tribulation on the Earth. This is the reward from God, because faithful believers kept God's instruction and obeyed God's word with patient endurance when they lived on the earth.<sup>338</sup> He also says regarding basing the biblical evidence of rapture before tribulation on the authority of 1 Thess. 4:17 that there are other pointers also: the event of Enoch's ascension into the air before a great flood (Gen 5:24) and God's promise that God will keep you from the tribulation (Rev 3:10).<sup>339</sup> In other words, he not only considered 1 Thess 4:1 to illustrate the rapture of Christian believers, but he also gave examples of the rapture case in several

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<sup>335</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, *그리스도의 내림* (*The Descent of Christ*) (Gyeong Seong: Holiness Church Press, 1939), 39.

<sup>336</sup> Seon Ju, Gil applied “데려감 (Whisk Away)” and Baird used “재 강림 (Re-Advent)” as terms to designate rapture.

<sup>337</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, *그리스도의 내림* (*The Descent of Christ*), 11-12.

<sup>338</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, “그리스도의 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ)”, *활천* (*Hwalcheon* 5, Gyeong Seong: Holiness Church Press, 1940), 7.

<sup>339</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, *그리스도의 내림* (*The Descent of Christ*), 15-16.

biblical stories such as the rapture of Enoch before the Great Flood (Gen. 5:24) and of before the great tribulation of the Earth and the Parousia.

Another unforgettable character who was devoted to developing early Korean Protestantism was Gi Cheol, Ju (1897-1944). Gi Cheol, Ju was a Presbyterian pastor and fought for Korea's independence from Japan's occupation. He was sentenced for ten years by the Japanese court because of his resistance to Shinto Shrine worship and was martyred during his sentence. His sermons focused on the events at the end of the world. For example, in one sermon he mentions that it had been said there would be no destruction of the earth because God himself made it. However, there had already been examples of the punishment of creation, namely, the Fall of Eden and the Great Flood. As Enoch walked with God before God took him to Heaven, we, the Church (devoted Christians), will be raptured to Heaven by Christ prior to seven years of tribulation.<sup>340</sup>

A contemporary of Gi Cheol, Ju was Seong Bong, Lee (1900 - 1965), a pastor who focused on Bible study for the revival of congregations. Lee refers to the rapture which will happen to the true Church (chosen bride: faithful believers) in the last days. At that time, Christ will appear in the air in order to meet the true Church there. After that, Christ will judge the world and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire (Mt. 3:12). Lee believed that only half of the total believers will be raptured.<sup>341</sup> An interesting point in his eschatology is that he considers the Kingdom of Heaven in the air to be the

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<sup>340</sup> This sermon was given in October, 1973. See Gi Cheol, Ju, *주기철 (Ju Gi Cheol)*, selected by KAIST (Korea Institute for Advanced Theological Studies) (Seoul: Hong Sung Sa, 2008), 96-98.

<sup>341</sup> Seong Bong, Lee, *이성봉 (Lee Seong Bong)*, selected by KAIST (Korea Institute for Advanced Theological Studies) (Seoul: Hong Sung Sa, 2008), 137-140.

faithful's hometown as demonstrated in this quote: "Dear followers, where is our homeland? The place where we long for more than our homeland is our home in Heaven in the air."<sup>342</sup>

### **3.2.1.b.iii Interpretation of 1 Thess 4. 13-18 during The Era of Development and Growth, and the Plateau of Korean Protestantism (1950 –)**

An important figure in 1950s Korean Protestantism is Eung Jo Kim (1896 – 1991), a pastor and the eleventh Chairman of the Korea Evangelical Holiness Church. He, like Gi Cheol, Ju also fought for independence from Japan's occupation. In 1978, he received a meritorious medal from the Korean Government in recognition of his contribution to the independence movement from Japan's occupation. The main message of his sermons concerned eschatology, and especially the Second Coming of Christ. He published a best-selling article entitled 말세와 예수 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ and End of the World)<sup>343</sup>, and his major field of study was the Book of Daniel and Revelation.<sup>344</sup> Eung Jo, Kim encapsulated his eschatology in such articles as: The Second Coming of Christ in Two Different States - the Second Coming of Christ in Air and the Second Coming of Christ on Earth; Rapture before Tribulation; Seven Years' Tribulation; Differentiation between Believers and Non-believers in the Resurrection; The Four Types of Judgment - Judgment on the Cross, Judgment of Nations of the World, Judgment of Survivors, and the Final Judgement; Revelation after the Millennial Kingdom; Emphasis on Judaic

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<sup>342</sup> Seong Bong, Lee, *이성봉 (Lee Seong Bong)*, 146.

<sup>343</sup> Eung Jo Kim, "말세와 예수 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ and End of the World)", *활천 (Hwalcheon* 5, Seoul: Evangelical Holiness Church Press, 1953), 4.

<sup>344</sup> Eung Jo Kim, "근대교회사와 김응조의 재림론 (Modern Church History and Eschatology of Kim Eung Jo)," *Korean Church History* 6 (Seoul: Research Institute of Korean Church History, 1997), 104.

Characteristics of the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>345</sup> Kim clearly indicates that his main eschatology involves the rapture before tribulation, Jesus Christ's Second Coming in the air, a wedding feast for those who have been raptured in the air, seven years tribulation, the millennial kingdom and the Final Judgment.<sup>346</sup> In terms of the meaning of rapture, it includes the meeting of faithful believers (Mt. 24:31, 2 Thess. 2:1, Heb. 12:23) and lifting up into the air (1 Thess. 4:12, Rev. 12:5). The state of rapture signifies resurrection of the dead (1 Thess. 4:16, 1 Cor. 15:52), change of state of living believers (1 Chr. 15:51, Phil. 3:21, and John 11:25), and the rapture of those who are faithful believers into the air. The time of the rapture will be before the tribulation (Luke 21:36, Rev. 3:10, Prov. 11:8 and 2 Thess. 1:6) but at the same time as the Second Coming of Christ in the air (Mt. 24:31 and 1 Thess. 4:17). The qualification for rapture is those who are free from sin (Heb. 9:28), the blameless (1 Thess. 5:23), righteous people (Heb. 11:4, Mt 5:8, and 1 John 3:3), and those who prepare lanterns (Mt, 25:11).<sup>347</sup>

Another present-day influential activist and writer in Korean Protestantism is David Yon Ggi Cho (1936 –). He is a pastor and the founder of the Yoido Full Gospel Church, which has the largest congregation in the world.<sup>348</sup> He is also the

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<sup>345</sup> Chang Gyun, Mock, “성결교회의 재림론 연구 (Study of Eschatology of Evangelical Holiness Church), A collection of Scholarly Monographs (Seoul: Seoul Shin Duck Church, 1997), 62-64.

<sup>346</sup> Eung Jo Kim, “말세와 예수 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ and End of the World),” 36-41.

<sup>347</sup> Eung Jo Kim, “말세와 예수 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ and End of the World),” 36-41. Eung Jo Kim published several books including *말세와 예수 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ and End of the World)* (Seoul: SongChungSa, 1952), *Bible Exposition: The Book of Daniel/Ezra* (Seoul: SongChungSa, 1981), *Bible Exposition: 1 Corinthians – 1 Timothy* (Seoul: SongChungSa, 1981), and *Bible Exposition: 2 Timothy – the Book of Revelation* (Seoul: SongChungSa, 1981).

<sup>348</sup> The total number of this congregation was claimed to be 750,000 in 2008. See David Yonggi Cho, *갈라디아서 데살로니가전, 후서 (A Commentary on the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Thessalonians)*, E-book (Seoul: Seoul Logos Co, 2008) Last accessed December 8, 2016.

president of the David Cho Evangelistic Mission (DCEM) and Chairman of the Board for 사랑과 행복 나눔 (Charity company of Sharing Happiness and Love),<sup>349</sup> the Korean Christian Leaders Association and, from 1992 – 2000, the World Assemblies of God Fellowship. He also founded Church Growth International in 1976, Hansei University in 1986, and a newspaper company, 국민일보 (Kukmin libo), in 1988<sup>350</sup>. He received not only a Presidential Citation in 1982, but also the Grand Order of Mogunghwa in 1991 from the Korean Government. The United States Congress awarded Cho the “Proud Korean Certificate” in 2007. In his commentary 갈라디아서, 데살로니가전, 후서 (*A Commentary on the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Thessalonians*), he points out that those who have died will at last be dressed in glorious garments and will awake and be raptured to the clouds.<sup>351</sup> He gives a more detailed explanation with his interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:16-17, saying that:

...in the moment that those who have slept in the Lord awake, they, together with those who are alive, will be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. These very clouds are not vapour or steam, but the clouds of God's glory. We will be lifted up into these clouds and receive the Lord in the air. The glorious change that we will undergo cannot be understood because it is mystery of the Lord. The only thing that we can understand is that our bodies will be changed into those able to receive the Kingdom of God. The faithful believer with this changed body who received the Lord will live with

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<sup>349</sup> 사랑과 행복 나눔 (Sharing Happiness and Love) is a charity organization working to support the homeless, the unemployed, and marginalized people.

<sup>350</sup> This was an organization which was built for teaching and training the principles of evangelism and church growth all over the world. See Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 521-23.

<sup>351</sup> David Yonggi Cho, 갈라디아서 데살로니가전, 후서 (*A Commentary on the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Thessalonians*) E-book ([link](#)) Last accessed December 8, 2016.



the Lord forever in the air.<sup>352</sup>

Moreover, Cho distinguished the second coming of the Christ in the air and the second coming of the Christ in the earth. According to his opinion, the first one denotes the return of Christ in the air without touching or setting foot on the ground. This is not for non-believers, but only faithful believers. The second one is the second coming of Christ on the ground in company with numerous faithful believers. This event will be followed with a heavenly wedding banquet.<sup>353</sup>

An equally influential figure, but working in the field of theological studies rather than focusing on Christian activism, is Chang Gyun Mock (1948 –). He was the president of the Seoul Theological University in 2004, and he has published and translated several books and articles, including *종말론 논쟁* (*A Dispute on Eschatology*), *현대 신학 논쟁* (*A Dispute on Modern Theology*), *현대 복음주의* (*Modern Evangelism*), and *슐라이에르마허의 신학사상* (*The Theology of Schleiermacher*).<sup>354</sup> He devotes himself to promoting and standardizing eschatology in Korea. He explains the validity of Premillennial Dispensationalism in his blog entitled, 그리스도의 재림과 천년왕국 (The Second Coming of Christ and Millennial Kingdom) by comparing it with other Millennialisms. This is an extract

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<sup>352</sup> David Yonggi Cho, *갈라디아서 데살로니가전, 후서* (*A Commentary on the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Thessalonians*) E-book Last accessed December 8, 2016.

<sup>353</sup> David Yonggi Cho, *요한계시록 강해* (*The Exposition of the Book of Revelation for Ordinary Believers*) (Seoul: Young San Publisher, 1976), 98-100.

<sup>354</sup> Chang Gyun Mock, *종말론 논쟁* (*A Dispute of Eschatology*) (Seoul: Doranno, 1998); *현대 신학 논쟁* (*A Dispute of Modern Theology*) (Seoul: Doranno, 1995); *현대 복음주의* (*Modern Evangelism*) (Seoul: Golden Owl, 2005); *슐라이에르마허의 신학사상* (*Theology of Schleiermacher*) (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1991).

from where he addresses and evaluates the various positions taken in eschatology:

Conclusion: Why is premillennial dispensationalism reasonable? I have shed light on what the three different positions in eschatology are. Actually, there has been an erosion of support for post-millennialism in Protestantism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The main tenet for this position is the view that this world is becoming better, in accordance with the passing of time, through the propagation of the Gospel and this world is turning into the millennial kingdom. The weak point of this view is that the Bible does not speak of the enhancement of the world, instead the Bible says that the nearer the Second Coming of Christ, the greater will be the increase of lawlessness, and the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:9-14 NRSV) ... The main problem with this Amillennialism is that Amillennialists interpret the resurrection of Revelation 20:4 as a spiritual resurrection, and the resurrection of Revelation 20:5 as the bodily resurrection, even though the two passages apply the same word, ἔζησαν (live), in the same context. However, they have differentiated it... Another point is that Amillennialism understands rapture as an event that takes place in the present and is the passage of believers to the Kingdom of Heaven after death. However, 1 Thess. 4:13-18 says the saints' rapture is not in the present but in the future and in rapture, not only those who have died but those who are alive will be caught up in the clouds together. Moreover, Amillennialism argues that there is no millennial gap between the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection of the wicked... Amillennialists argue that there is no biblical evidence for several resurrections. However, Revelation Chapter 20 mentions two kinds of resurrection clearly and there are many biblical texts which allude to both the resurrection of a selected group (Luke 14:14, 20:35; 1 Cor. 15:23; Phil. 3:11 and 1 Thess. 5) and the resurrection in two steps (Dan. 12:2 and John 5:29). Another point to support the millennial time gap is 1 Cor 15:22-24. In this passage, Paul applies the adverbs, ἔπειτα (then, 23) and εἴτα (then or next, 24), which have the meaning of consecutive time. Thus the view of Amillennialism which believes there is no gap between Parousia and the resurrection of the wicked is not confirmed.<sup>355</sup>

Another eminent Premillennial theologian and contemporary of Chang was Seong Ju, Lee, a professor of systematic theology at SungKyul University. He was inaugurated as president of this university in 1985. He contributed significantly to the standardization of eschatology and the four-fold gospel in Korea. He suggests

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<sup>355</sup> Chang Gyun Mock, 그리스도의 재림과 천년왕국 (The Second Coming of Christ and Millennial Kingdom) <http://blog.daum.net/jwithj/2315> (1, July 2014). Last accessed December 3, 2016.

the purpose of the second coming of Christ in the air is as follows: the purpose of the second coming of Christ in the air is to greet those who are the prepared believers in Christ. When Christ comes in the air, he receives the faithful believers to his abode and changes his subjects' bodies into glorious bodies, because if those faithful who are alive are not changed, they cannot be raptured. Thus, the Bible predicts not only resurrection of the dead believers, but also makes predictions about the change of their bodies into the glorious bodies of living believers. Such a change in their bodies includes spiritual and bodily bondage in God. This bondage is the most precious blessing which selected believers receive in the time of the Parousia<sup>356</sup> (1 Cor. 15:52: "The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed", and Phil. 3:21: "He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself"<sup>357</sup>. Lee also discusses the time and order of the second coming of Christ. Firstly, he asserts that the second coming of Christ in the air will precede the tribulation. At that time, the faithful believers will be raptured spontaneously. In terms of the time of rapture, he insists rapture will be prior to tribulation. This means those who are raptured will not pass through the tribulation. Following this, the tribulation will start as in the biblical account in Luke 21:36.<sup>358</sup> The word, "to flee away (ἐκφεύγω)", in this account can be interpreted as having the meaning "not to pass through the tribulation." That is why Lee insists the time of rapture should be prior to

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<sup>356</sup> Seong Ju Lee, *사중복음 (Four Fold Gospel)* (Seoul: SongChungSa, 1984), 634-35.

<sup>357</sup> Both of these passages are from the NRSV translation.

<sup>358</sup> Luke 21:36: "Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man". (NRSV).

tribulation.<sup>359</sup>

Another key theologian from Sungkyul University is Ki Ho, Song, who was the University president in 1994. He discusses the theory of 휴거 (rapture) in his article entitled “휴거의 시기에 대한 연구 (A Study of the Time of Rapture),” as follows. Many theologians in Korea consider the time of the rapture to be prior to the tribulation. Moreover, they believe that the second coming of Christ and the rapture of faithful believers will occur concurrently, and after this the tribulation will start on the earth. The evidence for this is found in a statement from the Bible: “The promise of The Lord that I will keep you (faithful believers) from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world (Revelation 3:10) and the promise of The Lord that Christ will rapture faithful believers in order to rescue them from the wrath that is coming (1 Thess. 1: 10).”<sup>360</sup> This belief that 1 Thess. 4:13-18 is evidence for the rapture of believers into the air during Parousia is also supported by well-known New Testament scholar and professor Sang Kun Lee.<sup>361</sup>

Two final scholars worthy of mention whose interpretation of the Bible supports Premillennial doctrine are Byeongdo Kang, author of *카리스종합주석 21: 데살로니가 전, 후서* (*The Charis Bible Commentary 21: 1,2 Thessalonians*), and Hyeon Ggi Ryu. Kang agrees that the faithful believers’ rapture will happen openly. Moreover, his account of the signs of Parousia include an increase in apostasy, the

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<sup>359</sup> Seong Ju, Lee, *Systematic Theology 3 Volume* (Seoul: SongChungSa, 1991), 336.

<sup>360</sup> Ki Ho, Song, “휴거의 시기에 대한 연구 (A Study of the Time of Rapture)”, *Sunggyul Theology Institute 3* (Anyang: SungKyul University, 1998), 10.

<sup>361</sup> Sang Kun Lee, *신약 주해 살전-딤후* (*The Lee’s Commentary on the Epistles 1 and 2 Thess., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus*) (Seoul: Education Department of Korean Christian Presbyterian Denomination, 1977), 64-65.

appearance of the Anti-Christ, war, famine, and earthquakes.<sup>362</sup>

Hyeon Ggi Ryu also argues that before the rapture, those believers who are alive will be changed into spiritual bodies as those who have already died, and they will be raptured to Heaven and meet Christ in bodies purified from all corruption.<sup>363</sup>

There are two key publications from publishers specializing in Christian theology which also support the arguments of Premillennial Dispensationalism. These publishers are Bible Net (바이블 넷트) and Bible Academy (바이블 아카데미). 바이블넷 (Bible Net) is a research institution for biblical studies, and published *옥스퍼드 원어 성경대전* (*The Oxford Bible Interpreter*).<sup>364</sup> This is the book that many pastors use to prepare their sermons. In the interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:13-18, this book takes rapture – understood as the faithful believer’s meeting with Christ in the air – for granted. Moreover, it mentions that while the raptured participate in a banquet in Heaven, those who are left behind will undergo tribulation.<sup>365</sup>

The second institution, 성서 아카데미 (Bible Academy) is an institution which

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<sup>362</sup> Byeongdo Kang, *카리스종합주석 21 데살로니가전후서* (*The Charis Bible Commentary: 1.2 Thessalonians*) (Seoul: the Christian Wisdom Publishing Company, 2003), 322 – 331.

<sup>363</sup> Hyeonggi Ryu, *성서주해 IV (Bible Exegesis IV)* (Seoul: Korea Christianity Culture Institution, 1981), 561. Besides these, there are many other books that mention or agree on the rapture, including Sun Han, Lee, *신약원어주해 고린도전서 – 디모데후서* (*The New Testament Exegesis: 1 Christian – 2 Timothy*) (Seoul: Logos, 1991), 231; *플립 성경주석 데살로니가전후서* (*Pulpit Bible Commentary Translation: I&II Thessalonians Exposition and Homiletics by P.J Gloag*) trans. Hui Sook, Lee (Seoul: Bo Moon Publishing, 1981), 153; Young Hyo Im, *데살로니가전서 강해연구: 성경교사와 설교자를 위한* (*A Practical Exposition of 1 Thessalonians for Bible Teachers and Preachers*) (Seoul: Young Moon Publishing, 2004), 311.

<sup>364</sup> This commentary is not affiliated to the University of Oxford.

<sup>365</sup> Jejawn, *옥스퍼드 원어 성경 대전 123: 데살로니가 전, 후서 디도서, 빌레몬서* (*The Oxford Bible Interpreter: Original Text Exposition on 1.2 Thessalonians, Titus, and Philemon 123*) (Seoul: Disciples’ Publisher and Bible Net, 2002), 322 and 328.

exists to research and interpret the Bible. It published *그랜드 종합주석 (The Grand Bible Commentary Series)*. In the commentary on 1-2 Thessalonians, this book gives a definition of *휴거* (rapture), saying that it is an event which will draw up the faithful believers into the air at the second coming of Christ in order to greet Christ and live with him in the air.<sup>366</sup>

Given the amount of scholarly research and belief in the Parousia evident from the above discussion, it is clear that Premillennial Dispensationalism still wields strong influence in Korean Protestantism and that 1 Thess 4.17 is a key text informing beliefs and expectations about the Christian's future hope and specifically the rapture.

### **3.2.1.c 1 Thess. 4:13–18, the Premillennial Dispensationalist Hermeneutic in South Korea, and its Environmental Implications**

The above discussion of the view of Korean Premillennial Dispensationalists on 1 Thess. 4:13- 18 has led to an understanding of how widely spread Premillennial Dispensationalism is in Korea and how important this particular text is in providing support for that perspective. More importantly, certain doctrinal constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism, such as the concept of rapture, shape the way the eschatological vision of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 is understood.

Yet this understanding has resulted in negative social effects within Korea, which include disregard for environmental conditions. The reasons for this are summarized by Cho, who mentions the ripple effect of the rapture on believers'

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<sup>366</sup> Bible Academy, *그랜드 종합주석 18 (The Grand Bible Commentary 18)* (Seoul: Disciples Publishing House, 1999), 440.

attitudes towards events that have happened in the world:

Pretribulationism and midtribulationism are the two major views of the rapture that provide ready resources for an escapist way out of the world. Their respective supporters might see the rapture as an isolated event that is a functional equivalent of death and judgment, and therefore not necessarily inconsistent with social transformation. The rapture could be perceived as an 'at any moment' judgement or reward for the believer, with the basis for evaluation being a biblical faith. However, dispensational premillennialists normally interpret the rapture as a way out of a collapsing world, a hiding place from the coming storm.<sup>367</sup>

The message of the doctrinal construct of rapture is that world destruction could happen soon, and thus we need to focus on personal salvation, not social issues. This doctrinal construct utilises believers' fear that non-Christian friends, family members, acquaintances, and even believers themselves – could be left behind at the rapture. This belief encourages them to promote evangelism to seek the conversion of non-Christians. Moreover, the message of this doctrinal construct shapes a viewpoint and ethic by which believers can interpret and consider the predicament of the world as having nothing to do with them because they do not exist in this world, which is confronted with chaotic and disconcerting events such as ecological disasters, severe earthquakes, and the possibility of World War Three. The "rapture will provide rescue for believers prior to the tribulation begins."<sup>368</sup> Thus the ethics of Premillennial Dispensationalism are not concerned with the ecological, economic, and social issues of the world. Instead, it emphasizes personal salvation and individual conversion of non-believers.

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<sup>367</sup> Paul Hang-Sik Cho, *Eschatology and Ecology*, 213.

<sup>368</sup> Michael Barkun, "Millenarians and Violence: The Case of the Christian Identity Movement," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 250.

### 3.2.1.d Other Possible Eschatological Perspectives on 1 Thess. 4:13-18

In this part, we have discussed the interpretation and understanding by Premillennial Dispensationalists of this eschatological text (1 Thess. 4:13-18) and the influence of the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism, especially that of “rapture.” This biblical discourse is applied to affirm that with Christ in Heaven is the only dwelling place for chosen faithful believers, and the final destination of earth is its total destruction or a catastrophic end through God’s punishment.

However, the Premillennial Dispensationalist reading of these verses is not the only one. One important interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 is the view that we cannot consistently reconstruct Paul’s viewpoint on the eschatological vision of the New Testament. Scholars who hold this view include W. G. Kümmel and J. Baumgarten. Their argument is that “Paul is simply not a logical thinker in the realm of eschatology... his comments are ad hoc, and use apocalyptic imagery that is taken over with little regard for its precise content.”<sup>369</sup> In other words, Paul did not make logical and consistent statements on eschatology in the undisputed Pauline letters.

A second alternative interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 is that the main point of this biblical account, especially the rapture story, is not to describe a literal sense of the rapture of the faithful believers. Instead, this is imagery representing Christ’s conquering of the realm of the air which was the domain of the demons.<sup>370</sup> Leon

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<sup>369</sup> Quoted in Seth Turner, “The Interim, Earthly Messianic Kingdom in Paul”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25, no. 3 (2003): 325.

<sup>370</sup> Randall E. Otto, “The Meeting in the Air (1 Thess. 4:17)”, *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 19 (1997): 192-212.



Morris explains more about the author's intention of picturing the faithful believers' meeting place in the air with Christ, saying that "The fact that the Lord chooses to meet His saints there, on the demons' home ground so to speak, shows something of His complete mastery over them."<sup>371</sup>

The third significant alternative interpretation of this eschatological discourse, particularly regarding the imagery of the believers' meeting place in the air with Christ in verse 17, is to address the fear of the congregations in the Thessalonian Church. In Jewish apocalyptic documents and the Old Testament, only those who are alive (such as Enoch) can be raptured into the air. This means the dead in Christ cannot join the rapture event. Thus, according to Joseph Plevnik, by showing the rapture as an image of believers both dead and living, Paul made an affirmation that the dead in Christ can participate in the rapture event before the living at the Parousia.<sup>372</sup> More importantly, Plevnik applies a Hellenistic Parousia model of reading 1 Thess. 4:13-18, interpreting it as a description of a group of important citizens traveling outside their city to meet an important visitor so that they can return to the city together<sup>373</sup>. On this understanding, "the coming Lord is met (in the air) by living and resurrected saints who then accompany him back to the Earth."<sup>374</sup> This indicates that the dead and the living "both alike would share in

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<sup>371</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 146.

<sup>372</sup> Joseph Plevnik, "The Taking up of the Faithful and the Resurrection of the Dead in 1Thess. 4:13-18," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 274-83, especially 283.

<sup>373</sup> The word "παρουσία" includes several meanings, such as presence of persons and of things, arrival, visit of a royal or official personage, and visit of a god. See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 1343.

The first exponent of the Hellenistic Parousia model was Deissmann (in 1923) and then Peterson supplied further support for the model from 1929 by using "newly discovered papyri, inscriptions, and literary sources, both Greek and Latin." See Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: an Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 6-7.

<sup>374</sup> Edward Adams, "The 'Coming of God' Tradition and its Influence on New Testament Parousia

the temporary terrestrial kingdom of Christ.”<sup>375</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe shares this viewpoint that this biblical discourse does not imply living in the air with Christ forever. “In this technical sense, the word was used of citizens, or a group of them, going out of the city to meet a visiting dignitary and then escorting him back into the city.”<sup>376</sup> James D. G. Dunn further supports this understanding of these verses, saying that this is an illustration “of the Lord descending from Heaven and being met by both living and resurrected saints (halfway?), (“caught up on the clouds, in the air,”)... to escort him to the earth”.<sup>377</sup> Seth Turner’s viewpoint is similar to Dunn’s and Malherbe’s in terms of the location of the messianic kingdom; he points out that Paul’s intention in 1 Thess. 4:13-17 is to reassure the congregation in the Thessalonian Church because of their grief about the non-participation of the dead Christians, who would only be raised at the end of the world. According to Turner, Paul’s statement that “the dead will see God’s act of salvation (and then share in a permanent earthly kingdom)” means that, in this respect, the final dwelling place of believers is not in Heaven, but on earth.<sup>378</sup>

Within this third interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:16-17 however, there are slight differences in understanding: for example, Gordon D. Fee disagrees with Malherbe’s interpretation because this eschatological discourse does not stipulate explicitly the immediate return to earth of the faithful believers after meeting Christ

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Texts”, in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb*, ed. Charlotte Hempel and Judith M. Lieu (London and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006), 1-19, especially 13.

<sup>375</sup> Turner, “The Interim, Earthly Messianic Kingdom in Paul”, 332.

<sup>376</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York and London: Doubleday, 2000), 277.

<sup>377</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of PAUL the Apostle* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1998), 300.

<sup>378</sup> Turner, “The Interim, Earthly Messianic Kingdom in Paul”, 343

in the air.<sup>379</sup> Fee points out that the Pauline epistles seldom describe the eschatological dwelling place of saints. There are only two places in the Bible, 2 Corinthians 5:1 and Colossians 1:5, that explicitly designate the believers' living place at the Parousia to be in the air or in Heaven. This is because "Paul has almost no interest whatever in our final eschatological 'geography'; rather, his interest is altogether personal, having to do with their being 'with the Lord,' whose 'abode' is regularly expressed as 'in Heaven'."<sup>380</sup> In other words, according to Fee, Paul's main interest is not geographical location, but the state of believers living with Christ forever at the Parousia. Fee asserts that Paul's main concern is the last part of verse 17: and so we will be with the Lord forever.<sup>381</sup>

As has been mentioned, these various interpretive opinions on 1 Thess. 4:13-18 divulge to us that there are diverse possible ways of interpreting and understanding this discourse. If we follow Malherbe's opinion, the final dwelling place of the believer should be the earth, not in the air. This understanding of this eschatological text gives an expanded sense to New Testament eschatology, which enables us to contribute to enhancing ethical concern regarding caring for the environment and the earth, because this earth is a unique place where humanity must dwell in posterity. It gives us the sense that we must preserve the earth and maintain it until the Parousia of Christ. However, as mentioned above, many Korean Protestants read and interpret 1 Thess. 4:13-18 through the lens of a certain Premillennial Dispensationalist doctrinal construct: rapture. This impinges

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<sup>379</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Michigan and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2009), 181. For the critical viewpoint of the Hellenistic Parousia model of 1 Thess. 4:15-17, see Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 4-10 and 89-90.

<sup>380</sup> Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 181.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

upon Korean Protestants' openness to the possibility of multi-dimensional interpretive ways of reading and interpreting this eschatological text.

### **3.2.1.e Conclusion**

This chapter has shed clear light on the argument that the Premillennial Dispensationalist doctrinal construct of rapture shapes the negative view of nature that has emerged in certain traditions of the Korean Protestant Church concerning New Testament eschatology, from the era of the western missionaries to the present. This doctrinal construct has been used to justify ecological disasters and the environmental predicament. As shown in the previous chapter, it is obvious that there has been an impact of certain doctrinal constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism on the reading and interpreting of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, particularly on the idea of "rapture." The early western missionaries to Korea interpreted this text literally, focusing on the "rapture" concept, and taught this interpretive tradition to the early Korean Christian leaders. This interpretive tradition is maintained continuously in present Korean Christian society. The adherents who interpret 1 Thess. 4:13-18 through the lens of this doctrinal construct of rapture understand this eschatological text as endorsing the fact that the faithful believers will be raptured in the air to participate in a heavenly banquet before the tribulation. This understanding fosters the belief that the Christian's eschatological hope is a rescuing of the believers from the wrecked vessel, the earth, before the tribulation by God's punishment. Thus, adherents of this interpretive strategy focus on personal salvation and being active in the propagation of Protestantism to people. More importantly, reading 1 Thess. 4:13-18 based on the doctrinal construct of rapture precludes the possibility of applying various alternative interpretive

approaches to this text. However, as shown above there *are* multi-dimensional interpretations of these apocalyptic texts in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – seen as Christ’s conquering of the demons’ realm (the air), and as figures coming to meet a visiting dignitary and then escorting him back into the city.

Having discussed Premillennial Dispensationalist interpretations of 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and the significance of the rapture within this doctrinal construct, the next important text is the Book of Revelation, especially chapters 6-16. These eschatological texts seem to prove the validity of the total destruction of the current world to the Korean Protestant churches, those who interpret these biblical texts with certain doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism which emphasise the total destruction of the Earth. The next chapter sheds light on the interpretive tradition of Korean Protestantism regarding these texts and gives an alternative way of reading of these eschatological texts.

## CHAPTER 4

### Eschatological Visions of the Book of Revelation (6-16) in Premillennial Dispensationalism in South Korea

#### 4.1 Introduction of this chapter

The purpose of this chapter is not only to illustrate the reading of the Book of Revelation by Premillennial Dispensationalists, but also to introduce alternative ways of reading of the Book of Revelation, particularly Rev. 6-16, in relation to God, human beings, and non-human creation.

For centuries, the Apocalypse of John gave rise to difficult interpretive problems for biblical scholars. The linguistic meaning of the word, 'apocalypse,' derived from the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις, has nothing to do with the destructive or catastrophic end of the world. Rather, the original meaning of this word indicates disclosure and revelation.<sup>382</sup> However, the English word, 'apocalypse,' is commonly used to refer to end-time scenarios, including disaster, calamity, death, natural destruction, and the end of the world. The Apocalypse of John embodies such scenes, particularly in terms of ecological disasters and the cataclysm of the universe, which includes giant hailstones, blood-stained seas, great earthquakes, outbreaks of plague, and the sun giving no light. These images can be read as implying that the destruction of the earth is an imminent and irretrievable destiny, brought about through the wrathful judgment of God. Many interpretations,

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<sup>382</sup> T. Holtz, "ἀποκάλυψις" in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, ed. H. Balz and G. Schneider (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990-93), 130-32. For more usage of this word, see *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament III*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-76), 563-92.

including the *Left Behind* novels<sup>383</sup> and *The Late Great Planet Earth*,<sup>384</sup> have focused on the destruction and catastrophic end of the earth. Crawford Gribben has pointed out the peril of these kinds of books, saying “Disaster fictions always sell, and the reason they sell to evangelicals is because these kinds of fictions emerge as the movement anticipates a future of acute crisis.”<sup>385</sup>

This is similar to the Premillennial Dispensationalist interpretation, which reads the Book of Revelation as focusing on certain doctrinal constructs of a Premillennial Dispensational-eschatological viewpoint, such as the impending ecological cataclysm of the universe and imminent total destruction of the earth. The important point is that the consistent interpretive methodology upon which Premillennial Dispensationalists rely is literal interpretation. This means that “the Bible is speaking about literal events that will occur in the future and the symbols cannot be taken as broad allegories.”<sup>386</sup> Taking this into account, Premillennial Dispensationalists seem to believe that the terrible and catastrophic imageries of the Book of Revelation, including plagues, disease, massive earthquakes, hailstones, supernatural darkness, and degradation of the sea, will be literally fulfilled. Thus Premillennial Dispensationalists have accepted the total destruction of the earth as fact. That is, the hermeneutical principles of Premillennial Dispensationalism clearly follow this doctrinal construct: imminent and total destruction of the earth.

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<sup>383</sup> Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995).

<sup>384</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970).

<sup>385</sup> Quoted from Mathew Guest, “Keeping the End in Mind: Left Behind, the Apocalypse and the Evangelical Imagination,” *Literature & Theology* 26, no. 4 (December 2012): 475. See, for the original source, Crawford Gribben *Rapture Fiction and the Evangelical Crisis* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2006), 61.

<sup>386</sup> David Criswell, *Controversies in Revelation: A Comparative Analysis of Premillennial Interpretation* (Dallas, TX: Fortress Adonal, 2012), 6.

As will be shown in detail below, many western missionaries to Korea, almost all of whom were Premillennial Dispensationalists, read the Apocalypse of John with the same hermeneutical principles and doctrinal constructs. This interpretive tradition prevailed with the early Korean Christian leaders, who were highly affected by these western missionaries, and this tradition has had a continuous impact on the interpretation and understanding of the Book of Revelation as concerns the future of the earth. This section will thus address how advocates of Premillennial Dispensationalism, including the founders, the western missionaries to Korea, the early Korean Christian leaders, and contemporary scholars and ministers, read and understand the Book of Revelation, particularly chapters 6 -16 which contain the bowls, trumpet, and seals of the Apocalypse.

#### **4.2 General Description of Revelation 6-16: the Bowls, Trumpet and Seals of the Apocalypse.**

In classifying the literary genre of the Book of Revelation, it is difficult and complex to determine it precisely or with any certainty “because texts often have some but not all of the same features, and literary forms change over time.”<sup>387</sup> In general, biblical scholars consider the Book of Revelation to consist of three kinds of literary genre: Letter, Prophecy, and Apocalypse.<sup>388</sup> In terms of authorship, there are

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<sup>387</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann, “The Tripartite Structure of the Sixth Seal, the Sixth Trumpet, and the Sixth Bowl of John’s Apocalypse (Rev 6:12-7:17; 9:13-11:14; 16:12-16),” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35/1 (March 1992): 69-79.

<sup>388</sup> Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2014), 103-12; G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 37-43; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2005), 6-8; Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2-17; David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary vol. 52, Revelation 1-5* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1997), lxxi-xc; Barbara R. Rossing, “Revelation” in *Hebrews, the General Epistles, and Revelation* ed. Margaret Aymer, Cynthia B



several views: John as the apostle John, a pseudonym, an early Christian elder, and an early Christian prophet.<sup>389</sup> According to Craig G. Koester, “the most plausible view is that John was the real name of the author and he was a Jewish Christian prophet active in Asia Minor.”<sup>390</sup> As to determining a specific date of composition for the book, this is divided into two main groups: the early date (AD 64-69) and the later date (AD 80-100).<sup>391</sup> However, the prevailing opinion about the date is in favour of the latter, which designates the era as being towards the end of the Roman emperor Domitian’s reign (AD 81-96).<sup>392</sup>

Concerning the literary framework of the Book of Revelation, there is no consensus among biblical scholars – this is because of its structural complexity. The author of this book sometimes clearly presents seven visions in a group; however, “he also breaks literary sequences, includes unnumbered visions, and overlaps scenes.”<sup>393</sup> This internal structural complexity of the book has led New Testament scholars to divide this book in different ways.<sup>394</sup> However, the generally accepted division is, according to Koester, Yarbro Collins, and Murphy, that the literary structure of the Book of Revelation is composed of a series of six vision cycles with an introduction and conclusion.<sup>395</sup> The main literary structures are as follows:

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Kittredge, and David A. Sanchez (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 715-65.

<sup>389</sup> See for more explanation about it, Koester, *Revelation*, 6-69. Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge and David A. Sanchez (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 716.

<sup>390</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 66.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid, 71-85.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid, 71, 74, 79; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lvii.

<sup>393</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 112.

<sup>394</sup> Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xc-cv; Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Study of the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1993), 1-37; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 159-80.

<sup>395</sup> Adela, Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1976), 5-55; Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation to John* (Harrisburg, PA, Trinity Press International, 1998), 47-56.

Introduction (1:1-8)

1. Christ and the Seven Assemblies (1:9-3:22)
  2. The Seven Seals (4:1-8:5)
  3. The Seven Trumpets (8:6-11:18)
  4. The Dragon, the Beasts, and the Faithful (11:19-15:4)
  5. The Seven Bowls and the Fall of Babylon (15:5-19:10)
  6. From the Beast's Demise to New Jerusalem (19:11-22:5)
- Conclusion (22:6-21)<sup>396</sup>

The Book of Revelation deals with certain issues pertaining to the seven churches in Asia Minor and offers each church a solution (2-3) that has an intimate connection with these churches' situations and circumstances. The author desires to indicate "what must soon take place," (Rev. 1:1, NRSV). He applies the literary device of a 'literary vision' <sup>397</sup> containing several catastrophic disasters and afflictions leading up to the climactic intervention. Three literary visions – the breaking of the seven seals, the blowing of the seven trumpets, and the pouring out of God's wrath in the seven bowls (6-16) – act as signals of these eschatological events in Heaven and earth. These seven judgment visions have same feature that "they typically begin in the presence of God (5:1-13; 8:2, 6; 15:1, 5-8), then depict a series of threats, and conclude in the presence of God (8:1, 3-5; 11:15-18; 19:1-10)." <sup>398</sup>

Moreover, the seven apocalyptic judgment groups have similar structural arrangements within cycles of seven. For example, the seal and trumpet judgements consist of a structural pattern of four + two (interlude) + one. In each

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<sup>396</sup> Koester, *Revelation 1-5*, 112.

<sup>397</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis, MN: T&T Clark, 1991), 29; Quote from Adams, *The Stars will fall from Heaven*, 236.

<sup>398</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 113.

judgement group, four short apocalyptic judgements (6:1-8; 8:6-13) are followed by two longer and more intensive judgements (6:9-17; 9:1-21). Then there is an interlude (7:1-17; 10-11:14) to break the sequence before the seventh judgement (heavenly worship) (8:5; 14:15-19). The bowl judgement has little different structural sequence to five + two (interlude) + one. After five short apocalyptic judgements (16:1-11), two longer judgements (16:12-21) follow. Then there is an interlude (17:1-18:24). Lastly, heavenly worship visions (unnumbered judgement vision: 19:1-10) follow. The interlude has two functions: postponement between the fierce apocalyptic judgement and the final climax scene of celebrating heavenly worship and explaining the reason for the delay of judgements. The reason for the delay is to provide a time during which people can be converted (7:1-17) and to bear witness (10:1-11:14).<sup>399</sup> “The unfolding revelation reaches its climax in 19:11-22:5 with the narration of the appearance of Christ and the triumph of God, the millennial reign of Christ and the martyrs, the last assize and the new creation.”<sup>400</sup> It is not only these peculiar symbols and imagery, but also the sudden switching between scenes which have led many biblical scholars to develop a wide variety of understandings of the Book of Revelation.

#### **4.3 Reading the Book of Revelation through the Hermeneutics of Premillennial Dispensationalism in South Korea**

According to David Bruckner, in mainline church culture the apocalyptic discourse is generally understood as involving a divinely initiated catastrophic end of the

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<sup>399</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 12-13; Koester, *Revelation*, 113.

<sup>400</sup> Adams, *The Stars Will fall from Heaven*, 236.

world through God's judgment. Such an apocalyptic belief holds that the destiny of earth and humans is predetermined by God.<sup>401</sup> The main eschatological text which seems to promote this approach is the Book of Revelation. This is because Revelation contains many wreckful and destructive visions of the earth as the signs of the prelude to God's judgement, including bloody rivers, earthquakes, plagues, a large-scale massacre, and universal chaos. This interpretive approach, well-known and popular in the U.S.A in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is an interpretative tradition of the Bible in Premillennial Dispensationalism and Premillennialism. This approach considers Rev. 4-22 to be prophecies which will be fulfilled in the future.<sup>402</sup> The essential verse for this interpretative tradition is Rev. 1:19: "Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this." Thus proponents of the biblical approach of Premillennial Dispensationalism regard the eschatological visions in the Book of Revelation as clarifying "both present reality and future events (and there is no clear indication that we should expect a neat division between the two)." <sup>403</sup> The main methodology for reading the Bible used by Premillennial Dispensationalists is literal interpretation. They claim that "the Book of Revelation is God's battle plan for the end."<sup>404</sup> To be more specific, they think that God's plan for the earth is the same as in the destructive and catastrophic vision of the earth written in the Book of Revelation.<sup>405</sup> They desire to apply statistics which indicate the worsening state of the earth to illustrate this: They point to increases in political conflicts, crime, wars, earthquakes, pollution of the oceans, and environmental

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<sup>401</sup> David C. Barker and Bearce H. David, "End-Times Theology, the Shadow of the Future, and Public Resistance to Addressing Global Climate Change", *Political Research Quarterly* 66 (2013): 267-79.

<sup>402</sup> Ian Boxall, *Revelation*, 111-12.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 74.

<sup>405</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 99.

degradation. “To them, these ‘signs’ prove that the prophetic clock has counted down almost all the way and then they can soon escape.”<sup>406</sup> Simon Woodman describes this viewpoint of Premillennial Dispensationalism and its negative view towards social conditions as follows:

Disturbing political events, the threat of nuclear war, or environmental catastrophe do not induce such terror because they are the expected signs of the end times. While such events will have negative effects upon the world, these are not expected to affect those who are part of the true Church, because they will already be safe in heaven while the predicted horrors are visited upon the earth. Whereas postmillennialism has often led to works of social justice, premillennialism tends towards social passivity, with faithful Christian living being interpreted as maintaining moral and ethical purity in the midst of an immoral and impure world.<sup>407</sup>

A second feature in the Premillennial Dispensationalists’ interpretative tradition is the insistence that there will be seven years of tribulation prior to the millennial Kingdom on the earth, based on the seventy weeks’ prophecy of the Book of Daniel 9:24-27. Each week in this chapter symbolizes one year. These two doctrinal constructs, tribulation and rapture, are Premillennial Dispensationalism’s main and dominant ideas of New Testament eschatology.

As mentioned above, the majority of the early western missionaries to Korea were Premillennial Dispensationalists. They brought this eschatology to the early Korean Christian leaders, and this theological tradition exerts continuing influence upon Korean Church society today. Many Korean Christians understand the final destiny of the earth to be one of total destruction, and that this world will increasingly deteriorate over time. Moreover, they interpret the Book of Revelation

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<sup>406</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 13.

<sup>407</sup> Simon Woodman, *The Book of Revelation* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 32

by focusing on the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism, in particular, the total destruction and catastrophic end of the earth through God's judgment.

The following sections will illustrate the interpretive tradition of the Book of Revelation in Korean Protestantism, from the beginning of Premillennial Dispensationalism through to the contemporary era, including the early western missionaries to Korea, the early Korean Christian leaders, contemporary scholars, and pastors who play a pivotal role in developing the Korean Church and who follow the hermeneutics of Premillennial Dispensationalism. All of them read and understand the Book of Revelation through the doctrinal construct of the imminent and total destruction of the earth.

#### **4.3.1 Interpretation of Rev. 6-16 during The Era of Commencement of Premillennial Dispensationalism (1800 - 1880)**

Different key figures in the early Premillennial Church interpreted what was happening in the world through their understanding of the Book of Revelation. John N. Darby, a significantly important figure as shown above, held that the political and military situation around the world was a sign of a coming World War. He identified Gog in the Book of Revelation 20:8 to be Russia. In his opinion, Russia (Gog) would extend its power to Palestine during the war.<sup>408</sup> James S. Gale, who became a theological student after listening to Moody's sermons at University College, Toronto in 1884 and worked as a missionary to Korea, mentioned the demolition of the earth at the return of Jesus Christ saying that "God will come in

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<sup>408</sup> John N. Darby, *Lectures on the Second Coming* (unknown place: G. Morrish, 1909), 183. For the entire interpretation of the Book of Revelation of Darby, see 54-89 pages of this book.

judgment and burn up this world, but the children of God don't belong to this world ... This world is getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer and nearer."<sup>409</sup> Cyrus Scofield considered Rev. 6-19 to designate the tribulation period. He mentioned that during the period of this tribulation, unprecedented trouble and disaster would happen literally as the scripture said.<sup>410</sup> Finally, William E. Blackstone explained what tribulation was all about in *Jesus is Coming*. He referred to various biblical texts including the Book of Revelation, chapters 6, 14, and 16. He said that this period was imminent, would be one of unequalled tribulation in the world as God poured down his wrath, and that this tribulation would include catastrophic disasters, plagues, famines, fires, and wars.<sup>411</sup> This eschatological reading of the Book of Revelation not only influenced the early western missionaries to Korea, but has continually shaped the interpretive tradition of the eschatological discourse in Korea throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. This discourse will be examined in the following section.

#### **4.3.2 Interpretation of Rev. 6-16 during The Era of Inauguration of the Early Western Missionaries to Korea and the Era of the Early Korean Church Leaders (1884 – 1945)**

This section discusses how the early western missionaries' interpretation of eschatological texts was transmitted to and became significant in the establishment of early Korean Protestantism.

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<sup>409</sup> Dwight L. Moody, "How Can Non-Church-Goers Be Reached?," "To Reformed Men," and "The Return of Our Lord", in *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), 185.

<sup>410</sup> C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 1359.

<sup>411</sup> Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, 73, 98, 102, 144, and 230.

William L. Swallen stated in the introduction to his book *계시록 대요 (Light on the Book of Revelation)* that the third part of this book deals mainly with the great disasters described in the Book of Revelation.<sup>412</sup> Moreover, he pointed out that prior to these eschatological disasters in the Book of Revelation, the Church (faithful believers) will be caught up in the air and be with Jesus Christ, and that after the seven years of these disasters, Jesus Christ will build his millennial kingdom on the earth so that the Church can live there for a millennium.<sup>413</sup> These seven years of disasters in the Book of Revelation – the tribulation period prior to the establishment of the millennial kingdom of God – are also clearly referred to by William M. Baird the author of *주재림론 (The Second Advent of Christ)*.<sup>414</sup> An interesting point is that Baird truly was positive that believers would evade the great tribulation: “It is clear that the faithful believers do not need to go through or resist or overcome these catastrophic events in the book of Revelation. Instead, they will avoid these natural disasters like strong and quick winds.”<sup>415</sup>

James S. Gale wrote of the coming of the millennial kingdom, and followed Scofield’s timetable in terms of human history. He emphasized the advent of the peaceful millennial kingdom on earth after the seven years’ great tribulation, and he argued for its validity through his interpretation of the three kinds of judgmental scenarios in the Book of Revelation (the seven seals, trumpets and bowls in verses 6-16). He considered the tribulation period to be the “Year of jubilee,” because the millennial kingdom would be inaugurated at the first day of the seventh

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<sup>412</sup> Swallen, *계시록 대요 (Light on the Book of Revelation)*, 2-3.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid, 70-71, 150-51.

<sup>414</sup> Baird, *주재림론 (The Second Advent of Christ)*, 55-59, 221.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid, 113.



millennium.<sup>416</sup> Moreover, Gale highlighted the importance of the literal interpretation of the eschatological texts in the Bible as follows: “As Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecy of the Old Testament literally, we must need to interpret and read the words of the prophecies in the Bible literally.”<sup>417</sup>

These interpretive traditions concerning the Book of Revelation were continued by the early Korean Church leaders. According to Seon Ju Gil, when the second coming of Jesus occurs prior to the seven years of great tribulation, the resurrected saints and faithful believers will be caught up in the air and participate in the wedding banquet of Heaven, while the unfaithful believers will encounter hardship in the seven years’ great tribulations on the earth. Gil explained this as follows.

If we read and interpret the book of Revelation 6 – 16, we will realize that these chapters refer to the tribulation for seven years. During the seven years tribulation, many eschatological disasters will happen and the current world will be engulfed in darkness. Thus, this world is going to be a scary place... The book of Revelation clearly explicitly shows twenty one cosmic and environmental catastrophes.<sup>418</sup>

He clearly pointed out that the seven years of tribulation include the divine judgements of the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls, found in the Book of Revelation. According to Gil’s interpretation of the seven years of tribulation, they will be divided into two sections. The first tribulation will take place over three and a half years. At that time, the second coming of Christ will happen and faithful believers will

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<sup>416</sup> Gale, *예수의 재림* (*Jesus is Coming*), 25-27.

<sup>417</sup> Gale, *예수의 재림* (*Jesus is Coming*), 7, 32.

<sup>418</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, 말세학” (“Malsaehak”) *Shinaungshanghwal* vol. 5, (April, 1936), 13.

be caught up in the air. The second stage, the last three and a half years, is the so-called Great Tribulation. Now, two Antichrists will appear on the earth. Simultaneously, two witnesses, Moses and Alia, will appear and preach the Gospel to those who are remain on the earth.<sup>419</sup> In this period, angels will evangelize the people on the earth while the faithful believers are taking part in the heavenly wedding banquet. Only 144,000 Israelites will receive salvation in this period, and the rest of people will go through this tribulation.<sup>420</sup> After the seven years' tribulation, Jesus Christ will return to the earth and the millennial kingdom will be inaugurated. Only those who keep and observe the faith of Jesus Christ can be granted membership of the millennial kingdom.<sup>421</sup>

Ik-Du Kim believed in an imminent Parousia.<sup>422</sup> In his sermon entitled "Time to wake up," he argued that signs of an imminent Parousia can be seen in socially and politically disastrous events such as an increase in the divorce rate, an increase in children's disobedience of parents' words, the prevalence of evil, and the massacre of 700,000 Korean people by Korean communists. All these events, according to Kim, prove the impending Parousia and the seven years of tribulation as indicated by the Book of Revelation.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, 말세학 ("Malsaehak") *Shinaungshanghwal* volume 5, (May), 1936, 11.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid, 12-15.

<sup>421</sup> Seon-Ju Gil, 말세학 ("Malsaehak") *Shinaungshanghwal* volume 5, (September), 1936, 10-11.

<sup>422</sup> Ung Kyu Pak summarises Ik-Du, Kim's contribution to churches and society by listing the following statistics: creation of revival worship meeting: 776; total sermons: 28000; annual participants of the worship services that Kim lead: 1500000; annual new church members: 288000; building of new churches: 150; remodeling of churches: at least 140; New Establishment of nursery schools: about 120; rebuilding of nursery schools: about 100; treatment of people who had a disease: about 10000; people who became a pastor after listening of Kim: about 200; people who became a pastor by propagation of Kim: fifty five. See, Ung Kyu Pak, *안악산골 김익두 목사 전기* (*Anak Mountain Village: Biography of Korean Healing Minister Ik-Du, Kim*) (Seoul: LifeBook, 1991), 70-71.

<sup>423</sup> Ung Kyu Pak, *안악산골 김익두 목사 전기* (*Anak Mountain Village*), 178-79.

Myeong Jik, Lee followed the eschatological time schedule of Premillennial Dispensationalism. He argued that after the passing of the seven years' tribulation by God's judgement of the seals and trumpets as described in Revelation 6-19, Jesus Christ will come back to the earth and the millennial kingdom will be inaugurated.<sup>424</sup> In a similar way to Seon Ju Gil, Lee divided the seven tribulations period into two periods. Each period is three and a half years of tribulation. He also believed that this generation is the last generation. The evidence for this is the current social and political situation, which is getting worse. There are so many events that signal the impending Parousia, such as the destruction of family, society, and state order by atheism, anarchism, and increase in crime rate.<sup>425</sup>

Seon-Ju Gill was, as outlined above, an activist against Shinto Shrine worship, and a martyr. According to Kyungbae Min, one of the most important reasons that the anti-shrine worship movement spread throughout Korea was that the majority of Pyongyang seminary students listened to the sermons of Ju (at that time, Ju was conducting his ministry in the San Jeong Hyun Church in Pyeong Yang) and then scattered all over the country, actively participating in the anti-Shinto worship movement.<sup>426</sup> In his sermon entitled "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ," Ju revealed his understanding of eschatology as follows:

Let us look at the final judgment and prepare beforehand through our holy life. It does not mean that you should not take care of secular affairs at all. What I

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<sup>424</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, "그리스도의 재림 (The Second Coming of Christ)", *활천* (Hwalcheon 4, 48); Myeong Jik Lee, *그리스도의 내림* (Descending of Christ), 6, 28, 60-61.

<sup>425</sup> Myeong Jik Lee, *그리스도의 내림* (Descending of Christ), 6.

<sup>426</sup> Kyungbae Min, *순교자 주기철 목사* (The Martyr "Gi Cheol, Ju") (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2007), 20.

mean is that because everything in the world will burn out at the day of God's judgment, we should not endeavour and focus too much on getting good things in the world. Instead, you must concentrate being prepared to enter the millennial kingdom of God. As you know, Enoch walked with God and went into heaven prior to the flood. The case of Enoch can be symbolized in our church too. We church members will be raptured to the air to meet the Lord before the seven years' tribulation as the Book of Revelation describes. How disappointing it will be if somebody who attends a church regularly cannot participate in the rapture. We should not be intoxicated in this world and forget the day of the Lord.<sup>427</sup>

As shown above, Ju believed not only in an imminent Parousia and the destruction of the earth, but he also took it for granted that the state of the world will deteriorate as time goes by.

#### **4.3.3 Interpretation of Rev. 6-16 during The Era of Development, Growth and the Plateau of Korean Protestantism (1950 -)**

According to professor Sung-Young Kim, Eung Jo Kim (1896 – 1991) was a key figure in asserting the imminent second coming of Christ.<sup>428</sup> Eung Jo, Kim, a specialist mainly in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, illustrated the great tribulation as the time that the night comes (Is. 21:12), the time of literal great tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21), the time of examination (Rev. 3:10), and the time of Jacob's tribulation (Jer. 30:7). According to him, the tribulation represents two purposes: God's punishment towards Gentiles' evil (Rom. 2:8-9, Lk. 21:22, Eccl. 8:11) and discipline of the Jews (Mal. 3:2-3, Dan. 12:12). In terms of his understanding of tribulation in the book of Revelation, he stated that during the

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<sup>427</sup> Seon-Ju Gill, *주기철 (Ju Gi Cheol)*, selected by KAIST, 98.

<sup>428</sup> Sung-Young, Kim, "영암 김응조 목사의 종말론적인 신앙과 삶 (Eschatological Faith and Life of Rev. Eung Jo Kim)," *성결신학연구 (Holiness Theology Studies)*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Sungkyul University Holiness Theology Studies, 1996), 157-68.

tribulation, there will not only be endless wars (Rev. 6:4; 16:4; 14:25) and severe famines (Rev. 6:6), but also contagious diseases (Rev. 16:10) and natural disasters (Rev. 6:12; 8:12; 11:13). Moreover, the reason for the occurrence of the great tribulation is the deportation of the devil, who was holding power in the air (Rev. 12:9).<sup>429</sup>

David Yon Ggi Cho (1936 -) is an influential pastor as mentioned in the chapter three. In 1976 he published his book, entitled *평신도를 위한 요한계시록 강해* (*The Exposition of the Book of Revelation for Ordinary Believers*). He utilised this book as a textbook for teaching his congregation. But, this book has also been very widely read by many people.<sup>430</sup> In the introduction to chapter five, he begins with this phrase: “Now, what we will study in Revelation 6-19 is what will happen in the seven years’ tribulation period.”<sup>431</sup> Of particular note is Cho’s literal interpretation of chapter 6:12-17:

When the sixth seal is removed, a terrible natural disaster happened. Because of the great earthquakes and the ashes’ covering of the sky, the sun became black as sackcloth. Moreover, the moon turns red due to ashes and dust... How severe the earthquakes are, each mountain and island is moved from place to

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<sup>429</sup> Eung Jo Kim, *말세와 예수 재림* (*The Latter Days the Second Advent*) (Seoul: SungKyul Denomination Publisher, 1962), 51-59.

<sup>430</sup> These are Cho’s bestselling books: *요한계시록 강해* (*The Exposition of the Book of Revelation for Ordinary Believers*) (Seoul: Young San Publisher, 1976); *사차원의 영적 세계* (*The Fourth Dimension of Spiritual World*) (Seoul: SeoulMalsseum Publisher, 1998); *나는 이렇게 기도한다* (*I Pray Like This*) (Seoul: SeoulMalsseum Publisher, 1998); *베스트 요약설교* (*The Best Summary Preaching*) (Seoul: SeoulMalsseum Publisher, 2012); *조용기 목사의 Best 10분설교* (*The Best Ten Minute Sermons of Reverend Cho*) (Seoul: SeoulMalsseum Publisher, 2013); *이것이 믿음이다* (*This is the Faith*) (Seoul: YoungSan Publisher, 1979). The last book was republished in 2013 (Seoul: ShinAnggye). He wrote almost one hundred books in total.

<sup>431</sup> Cho, *요한계시록 강해* (*The Exposition of the Book of Revelation for Ordinary Believers*), 138.

place.<sup>432</sup>

In addition, in the analysis of Rev. 8:7,<sup>433</sup> the scene of the first angel's trumpet, he stated the words "hail and fire, mixed with blood" to be representative of the image of Atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs which fall down from heaven numerous.<sup>434</sup> He believed that these weapons of mass destruction will be used in the great war between the Federation of Arab Republics and the State of Israel, which will occur in the first three and a half years of the seven years tribulation. He also stated that the war will result in the death of one quarter of the total population of the world, burning down of one-third of trees and grains in the world, and great famine.<sup>435</sup>

Seong Ju, Lee argued that the tribulation on the earth will happen based on the Book of Revelation. Moreover, like Eung Jo Kim, he explained the reason, purpose and result of the Great Tribulation as follows:

As Christ returns to the air, the devil who has been working in the air, is deprived of his power and comes down to the earth. Thus the territory in which the devil exerted his influence changed from the air to the, ground, Earth and this result in the Great Tribulation. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short (Rev. 12:12) NRSV... From the time of the Second Coming of Christ in the air to the time of the Second Coming of Christ in the earth, this is the period of the Great Tribulation in the earth.<sup>436</sup>

Hal Lindsey (1929 - ) is a Premillennial Dispensationalist and Christian writer

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>433</sup> "The first angel blew his trumpet, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were hurled to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up" (NRSV).

<sup>434</sup> Cho, *The Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 174.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid, 175-79.

<sup>436</sup> Seong Ju Lee, *Four Fold Gospel*, 635-36.

in the U.S.A. He got a Masters degree in theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, majoring in the New Testament and early Greek literature. He wrote numerous books, including *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad*,<sup>437</sup> *The Liberation of Planet Earth*<sup>438</sup>, *There's a New World Coming*,<sup>439</sup> and *The Late, Great Planet Earth*.<sup>440</sup> *The Late, Great Planet Earth* in particular played a crucial role in introducing and popularizing Premillennial Dispensationalism in the U.S.A and around the world. In terms of his understanding of eschatology, he insists that the eschatological texts in the Bible make predictions of coming events and circumstances that will happen on the earth before the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>441</sup> An interesting point is that he considers that the inauguration period of the end time described in the Bible is the regathering of the people of Israel in their homeland, Palestine. He said that "The general time of this seven-year period couldn't begin until the Jewish people re-established their nation in their ancient homeland of Palestine."<sup>442</sup> He states that the most important teaching of the apostle Paul in terms of eschatology is that the believers will be raptured before the tribulation, as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 describes.<sup>443</sup> He also states that "The largest descriptive volume of the Tribulation is found in Revelation 6 through 19."<sup>444</sup> He interprets the sixth seal judgement in Rev. 6: 12-14 as being the literal event of a nuclear explosion as follows:

This meaning, coupled with the darkening of the sun and the moon, leads me to

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<sup>437</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad* (New York, NY: WND Books, 2011).

<sup>438</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Liberation of Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970).

<sup>439</sup> Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publisher, 1973).

<sup>440</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970).

<sup>441</sup> Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 17.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid, 141-42.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, 143.

believe that the Apostle John is describing an earthquake set off by many nuclear explosions... a world-wide nuclear war could set them all off together in an interrelated shaking of our planet.<sup>445</sup>

Lindsey is still popular in Korean Protestantism, and was especially so between the 1970s and 1990s, which was the starting point of his books being translated into Korean and sold in bookstores.<sup>446</sup> His influence contributed negatively to establishing a representative Korean Christian heresy, named The Dami Christian Mission Community, which appeared in the late 1980s and almost disappeared in 1992 (see above chapter 2). This is because the leader of Dami Mission Community, JangLim, Lee was deeply influenced by Lindsey's books and eschatology.<sup>447</sup> This mission community caused severe damage to Korean society and churches.<sup>448</sup> Lindsey's books are, however, still selling in bookstores in both translation and original versions.

The influential Grand Bible Commentary (1999) has twenty volumes,

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<sup>445</sup> Lindsey, *There's A New World Coming*, 96.

<sup>446</sup> The following is a list of some of Hal Lindsey's books which have been translated and published in Korea: *악령의 세계* (*Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*) trans. YongSoon, Kim (Seoul: Voice Publication, 1975); *신세계 도래* (*There's A New World Coming*) trans. YongSoon, Kim (Seoul: Voice Publication, 1976); *세계 종말을 위한 소망* (*The Terminal Generation by Hal Lindsey*) trans. Myoungdal, Kwon (Seoul: Voice Publication, 1977); *죄의 여로* (*The Guilt Trip*) trans. Hwaja, Yoo (Seoul: LifeBooks, 1977); *1980년 아마겟돈 폭발* (*The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*) trans. YongSoon, Kim (Seoul: Voice Publication, 1983); *지구 유성의 자유* (*The Liberation of Planet Earth*) trans. YongSoon, Kim (Seoul: Voice Publication, 1986); *홀로코스트로 가는 길* (*The Road to Holocaust*) trans. Kichul Han (Seoul: Christian World, 1990).

<sup>447</sup> These contents are taken from the transcript of an interview between an announcer Sungyoon, Kim and Woocho No, who is president of Ezra Bible Academy in Korea. Changwon Christian Broadcasting released a program, named 그리스도를 아십니까? (Do you know Christ?) which explained Christian doctrine and history from 1997-1998. At that time, No was the only main presenter in that program. See, <http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=adamhawa&logNo=140211694551>  
<http://thebookliih.tistory.com/22> Last accessed 23 March, 2017.

<sup>448</sup> For further details on this issue, see the first part of this thesis, 1.4.3.1 Orientation of Eschatology of Korean Protestant Church after Liberation from Japanese Occupation (1945 – today).



spanning from Genesis to the Book of Revelation. According to BibleNet, this commentary has sold about 100,000 copies.<sup>449</sup> The author of this commentary interpreted Rev. 6:12-17 as follows:

Although the disaster by the sixth seal sustains damage fully in the entire universe, this is the very powerful force of disaster that has never been seen before and reaches into the heavenly bodies. If we look specifically at what the text distinctly shows about the catastrophe, we realise that not only do the sun and the moon lose their light, but the stars also fall to the ground. Moreover, there are great earthquakes in the Earth, and mountains and islands move. Thus great confusion and fear will run rampant in this world... In fact, it is often noticed in the Old and the New Testament that prior to the day of God's final judgment, there will be universal and catastrophic events in the universe (Is. 13:10; 50:3; Jer. 4:23; Ez. 32:7,8; Ji. 2:31; 3:15; Am. 8:9, 10; Mi. 3:6; Mt. 24: 29; Mk. 13:24; Lk. 21:25). And like the words of these prophecies, there will be a huge catastrophic disaster in the world that we live in before God's judgement day.<sup>450</sup>

The Oxford Bible Interpreter (2002) is also a well-known commentary in the Korean Protestant Church. The group of advisors and interpreters for this book is comprised of fifty-three members. Those members include twenty-seven senior ministers who do ministry at or are retired from mega churches<sup>451</sup> and twenty-six theologians who work at or who are retired from seminaries and universities.<sup>452</sup> The authors of this book interpret the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls judgements literally. For example, they interpret "a great earthquake" in 6:12 as a literal

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<sup>449</sup>[http://biblenet.co.kr/s07\\_1.php?bo\\_table=review&wr\\_id=2&sca=%EC%A0%84%EC%A7%91%EB%A5%98&type=&ctyp=&stz](http://biblenet.co.kr/s07_1.php?bo_table=review&wr_id=2&sca=%EC%A0%84%EC%A7%91%EB%A5%98&type=&ctyp=&stz) Last accessed April 4, 2017). In considering the size of Korean Protestantism, this number of sales (100,000 sales) is enormous.

<sup>450</sup> Bible Academy, *그랜드 종합주석 20 (The Grand Bible Commentary 20)* (Seoul: Disciples Publishing House, 1999), 138.

<sup>451</sup> Each church has at least 10,000 members. David Yon Ggi Cho is also a member of it.

<sup>452</sup> Jejawon, *옥스퍼드 원어 성경 대전 129: 요한계시록 제 1-11 장 (The Oxford Bible Interpreter 129: Revelation 1-11)* (Seoul: Disciples' Publisher and Bible Net, 2002), 19 (the preceding page of table of contents).

earthquake which announces God's eschatological judgment,<sup>453</sup> and "the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood" in 6:12 as a literal event that the disappearance of the sun's glimmer and red moon which was caused by a change in the nature of the moon.<sup>454</sup> Moreover, they held that "the stars of the sky fell to the earth" in 6:13 and "every mountain and island was removed from its place" in 6:14 are literal events which are engendered by the catastrophe of heavenly bodies.<sup>455</sup> In addition, in terms of the phrases "hail, fire, and mixed with blood," and "burning up of a third of the earth and trees, and burning up of all green grass," which are illustrated in 8:7, the author of this book takes them to be literal events which proclaim the harshness of God's punishment.<sup>456</sup>

#### **4.4 The Book of Revelation in Ethics and the Premillennial Dispensationalist Hermeneutic in South Korea**

As shown above, an analysis of Premillennial Dispensationalists' reading of the Book of Revelation in Korea, and 6-16 especially, sheds light on the lasting impact of the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism – i.e. total destruction, imminent Parousia, and the catastrophic end of the earth – on Korean Protestantism. In these circumstances, if a reader focuses on these doctrinal constructs, they will read and interpret the Book of Revelation under the impression that a catastrophic end of the earth is impending. Moreover, reading the Book of Revelation through these doctrinal constructs can prioritize certain eschatological texts which illustrate the catastrophic end of the earth while others are

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<sup>453</sup> *The Oxford Bible Interpreter* 129: *Revelation* 1-11, 429.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*, 430.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid*, 431-32.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid*, 519-21.

marginalized. Thus, they may consider these texts, which seem to depict cosmic destruction before Parousia, as the main and central texts for understanding New Testament Eschatology. If so, the devastating images illustrated in the Book of Revelation can shape the Christian's view, attitude, and ethical stance towards social, political, and environmental issues because the main doctrinal constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism, such as imminent Parousia and the total destruction of the earth, lead readers to interpret these images as real, literal events, and the destruction of the ecosystem as an inevitable process ahead of the imminent return of Christ. Such eschatological viewpoints "foster a view of the earth as merely a temporary and soon-to-be destroyed home for humans, from which the elect will be rescued."<sup>457</sup> Even worse, "those who call for environmental care may be working against God's purposes, since they are trying (in vain, of course) to delay the process by which the End will come."<sup>458</sup> Indeed, some writers confirm the negative impact of doctrinal constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism on Christian's attitudes towards the environment, saying that,

... belief in the imminence of the end times tends to make evangelicals careless stewards of our forests, soils, wildlife, air, water, seas, and climate...Further, careless talk about the imminence of Armageddon suggests a darker fascination with death, militarization, and violence undeserving of Christians and altogether alien to Christ's teaching.<sup>459</sup>

Thus, in summary, the eschatological vision of the New Testament as seen through the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism has shaped a certain

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<sup>457</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 8.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>459</sup> David W. Orr, "Armageddon Versus Extinction," *Conservation Biology* 19 (2005): 291-92.

environmental ethic – a so-called “world-negating, anti-environmental stance”<sup>460</sup> – for contemporary Korean Christians. In a sense, this raises a critical question as to whether the eschatological visions of the Book of Revelation 6-16 necessarily depict an environmentally damaging Christian eschatology or not. Dealing with this inquiry involves us looking at the various kinds of other possible readings or interpretations of the Book of Revelation. The following section elucidates these various alternative reading strategies for the Book of Revelation, and their potential for unveiling other possible eschatological perspectives on this book.

#### **4.5 Other Possible Eschatological Perspectives on the Book of Revelation**

In this chapter, we have addressed not only the eschatological vision of the Book of Revelation through the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism but also the consistent influence of these doctrinal constructs among contemporary Korean Christians, by discussing the work of the selected leading Korean scholars, pastors, and western missionaries to Korea.

In the perspective of Premillennial Dispensationalism, the images of the Book of Revelation concerning the future of the earth present the cosmic catastrophic end of the world by God’s judgement. Thus, according to this interpretive tradition, these catastrophic events in the Book of Revelation represent the signs of the prelude to the imminent Parousia of Christ, which is accompanied by ecological violence. However, this is not the only way to read these biblical texts. Instead, there are various ways in which to read and understand these eschatological texts, all of which will be briefly discussed below. These include: as

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<sup>460</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 8.

depicting social-political convulsions<sup>461</sup>; as the traditional-Jewish apocalyptic language of theophany<sup>462</sup>; as cosmic catastrophic events by God's climatic judgement but not involving the end of the physical universe<sup>463</sup>; as cosmic catastrophic events announcing the process of the dissolution of the cosmic order,<sup>464</sup>; as "a change of God's plan,"<sup>465</sup>; God's warning signal to exhort people to repentance<sup>466</sup>; and "a testimony to the disordering and polluting effects of idolatrous human rule."<sup>467</sup> According to Edward Adams, the language of Rev. 6:12-14 "has a strongly figurative dimension ... but there is disagreement about what it actually refers to."<sup>468</sup>

One way to read these eschatological texts which seem to depict the cosmic catastrophic end of the earth is to consider them to represent the social-political upheaval that is envisaged in Jewish apocalyptic literatures and the Hebrew Bible.<sup>469</sup> In fact, there are plenty of clusters of passages of the Book of Revelation to indicate influence from these documents.<sup>470</sup> For example, G. B. Caird reads Rev. 6:12-17 as a portrayal of social-political convulsions. He suggests that the passage that reads "the stars of the sky fell to the earth" in verse 12 is derived from

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<sup>461</sup> G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: Adam & Charles Black), 196, 90.

<sup>462</sup> Mark B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal? The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 223.

<sup>463</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publisher, 1992), 451; *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publisher, 1995).

<sup>464</sup> Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 62-73, 92-95; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 395-404.

<sup>465</sup> Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 139-155.

<sup>466</sup> Rossing, *Rapture Exposed*, 85-94.

<sup>467</sup> Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 220.

<sup>468</sup> Adams, *Stars will Fall from Heaven*, 243.

<sup>469</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 108.

<sup>470</sup> For more detailed explanation, see Beale, *the Book of Revelation*, 76-107.

Isa. 34:2-4, indicating it to be the fall of earthly kings.<sup>471</sup> Moreover, he contends that “the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood” in verse 12 is a quotation from the prophecy of Joel 2:28-3:3 portending “the judgment of the nations which have oppressed Jerusalem and the restoration of the Jewish national fortunes.”<sup>472</sup> Lastly, he points out that the catastrophic imagery of “a great earthquake” in verse 12 is to stand for “the overthrow of a worldly political order organized in hostility to God.”<sup>473</sup> According to N. T. Wright, the apocalyptic language used elsewhere in the New Testament, such as the sun and moon’s getting dark, or the shaking and falling of heavenly bodies in Mk 13: 24-27, represents not the cosmic end by God’s judgement, but the falling of the city of Jerusalem or “earthshattering events in the social-political spheres.”<sup>474</sup> He mentions that the language of the cosmic end is a linguistic convention of Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>475</sup> Even though he does not specifically interpret Rev.6-16, he represents another example of interpreting imagery of cosmic destruction in socio-political terms: it indicates not the literal end of the earth, but a major upheaval in its social organization.<sup>476</sup> As Barbara R. Rossing has argued, those environmental disasters show impending signs or warnings of what may happen if the unjust oppressor continues to do unjust actions to the environment.<sup>477</sup> To be more specific, the direct target of God’s punishment in the Book of Revelation is not the environment but the

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<sup>471</sup> Caird, *Revelation of St. John*, 89.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid, 90. According to Caird, Luke 23:28-31 and Hebrews 12:27, like Revelation 6:12, all used the catastrophic imagery of earthquake as representing social-political upheaval, quoting passages from the Hebrew Bible such as Hosea 10:8.

<sup>474</sup> N. T. Wright, *New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of Christian Hope* (Cambridge: Grove Books Limited, 1999), 9.

<sup>475</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 280-99.

<sup>476</sup> Edward Adams, *Stars Will Fall from Heaven*, 5-16.

<sup>477</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, “For the Healing of the World: Reading Revelation Ecologically”, in *From Every People and Nation*, ed. David Rhoads (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 175.

empire. As Stephen Moore also argues, the destroyers of the natural environment in Rev. 11:18 are the Romans who depleted and polluted it for economic and profit.<sup>478</sup>

The second way of reading Rev. 6-16 is to consider the catastrophic images of these texts as the traditional Jewish apocalyptic language of theophany, especially in Rev. 6:12-17 and 16:17-21.<sup>479</sup> In fact, in the Jewish tradition, the catastrophic images such as earthquakes, and the disappearance of mountains, heavenly bodies, earth, and sea were a common *topos* for announcing God's coming, "both in judgement and salvation, with attendant portrayals of nature in considerable upheaval"<sup>480</sup> (Judg. 5: 3-5; 2 Sam. 22:8-16; Ps. 18:7-15; Isa 13: 13-16; 5-6; Mos. 10:4-7; Deut. 33:1-2; *1 En.* 1:1-9; 102: 3; *Apoc. Zeph.* 12:6-7; Jbt 16:15; *T. Levi* 3:9).<sup>481</sup> In other words, the images of judgement in the Book of Revelation are a way of "enhancing the impact of his presentation."<sup>482</sup>

An interesting point which is closely related to the third and fourth interpretations is that the traditional Jewish apocalyptic language of theophany is used both in designating the end of the universe (*1 En.* 1:1-9; *4 Ezra* 6:11-15) and portraying the gigantic power of God without it incurring the ending of the cosmos (Judg 5:3-5; Ps. 18: 7-15). Edward Adams interpreted various apocalyptic texts which contain cosmic disaster imagery in Jewish Apocalyptic and related literatures, and Old and New Testament texts, side by side with the idea that these texts envisage real and actual catastrophic results. Specifically, in his interpretation

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<sup>478</sup> Stephen D. Moore, *Revealing the New Testament* (Stockbridge, MA: Thinking Strings), 592-93.

<sup>479</sup> Bauckham, *Theology of The Book of Revelation*, 21.

<sup>480</sup> Mark B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 223.

<sup>481</sup> For a more detailed list, see Richard Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John," *Novum Testamentum* 19 (1977): 224-25.

<sup>482</sup> Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 217.

of Rev. 6:12-17, Adams argued that “the cosmic occurrences of Rev. 12-17 either prefigure or initiate the passing away of the present heaven and earth” (cf. Rev. 21:1)<sup>483</sup> even though he criticizes the use of literal interpretation methodology for reading these texts.<sup>484</sup> This assertion aligns with the view that the cosmos, according to these texts, will be destroyed in a kind of physical cosmic collapse, an act of de-creation (even though this does not mean that it is annihilated, but rather reduced back to its elements). However, there is another opinion that suggests the slightly opposite view: the non-annihilation of the created order. For example, according to Mark Stephens, eschatological disaster in Rev. 6:12-17 “functions as a means of bringing exposure to the penetrating gaze of divine justice.”<sup>485</sup> Thus the detailed expression of vanished sky and the removal of some mountains and islands signifies the elimination of all hiding places in order to bring humanity to the place of God’s judgment. Furthermore, the cosmic catastrophic events in 16:17-21 function as “a means of judgement, in that it brings about the collapse of the [only evil] cities of the nations (16:19).”<sup>486</sup> But the important point here is that this does not mean to bring about an inevitable corollary – the annihilation of the cosmos. Instead, the focus of cosmic disasters is directed towards wicked people and cities, to annihilate them by God’s judgement.<sup>487</sup> Thus these eschatological catastrophes in the Book of Revelation can be read in a metaphorical way, and not as necessarily indicating annihilation of the cosmos, although it is feasible that Jewish

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<sup>483</sup> Adams, *Stars will fall from Heaven*, 17.

<sup>484</sup> Adams pointed out that the author of apocalyptic texts in the Jewish apocalyptic texts and the Old and New Testaments applied “language and imagery of universal catastrophe for envisioning precisely that. Since a full-blown cosmic catastrophe ... is outside human experience, there is no other way of envisioning it than by figure, analogy, and imaginative construal.” Adams, *Stars will fall from Heaven*, 17.

<sup>485</sup> Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 224.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 225.



apocalyptic language of theophany sometimes refers to real catastrophic events.<sup>488</sup>

The fifth and sixth interpretive strategies of these seven judgements in the Book of Revelation suggest that these judgement scenarios unveil the possibility of a change of God's plan and God's warning signal to exhort people to repentance. According to Wes Howard Brook and Anthony Gwyther, trumpet images in the Book of Revelation evoke several signals such as "the encounter with YHWH ...YHWH's function as divine warrior ... and a warning to repent before it was too late (e.g., Ezek. 33:1-20)."<sup>489</sup> In addition, Stephens mentions the same point, that the main purpose of catastrophic images embodied in the bowls, trumpets, and seals is to serve the rhetorical function that "God is shaking the ground underneath the feet of the audience ... the foundation of their lives is treacherously unstable."<sup>490</sup> Actually, ecological disasters including hail, fire, blood, and several plagues, which occur through the trumpet judgement, recall the Exodus story concerning God's punishment towards the oppressor of the Israelites: Pharaoh of Egypt (Exod. 7:14ff). The purpose of the trumpets' judgement functioned as a warning sign "for destroying those who destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18).<sup>491</sup> For example, the trumpet judgements in Rev. 8:6-13 exerted a bad effect in only a third of subjects and functioned as a warning signal to fulfill "a divine purpose of leading people away from evil and back to God (cf. Wisd. of Sol. 12:8-11 and Ezek. 5:2)".<sup>492</sup> More importantly, the trumpet judgment sheds light on God's lesson that "threats of punishment are not an effective means of leading people to repentance (cf. Isa.

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<sup>488</sup> Adams, *Stars will fall from Heaven*, 245-46.

<sup>489</sup> Howard Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 143-44.

<sup>490</sup> Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 222.

<sup>491</sup> Rossing, *Rapture exposed*, 91; Aune, *WBC Revelation 6-16*, 569; Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 221; Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*,

<sup>492</sup> Howard Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 144-45.

42:25; 43:19) ... the death and resurrection of Jesus the Lamb revealed a change in God's plan."<sup>493</sup> Human actions motivate God to change his plan towards humans. It was God's strategy to send prophets and Jesus the Lamb to the people (cf. Rev. 6:9) – and that they are killed. And then "God would vindicate their devotion with the most powerful act of divine sovereignty possible: the returning to life of the dead ... the murdered witnesses being raised from death leads people to acknowledge God as true sovereign."<sup>494</sup> God desires to lead people to repentance without threat of violence. Instead, YHWH not only shows love and compassion towards humans through nonviolent action but he also vindicates his divine sovereignty through raising prophets and Jesus from death.

The seventh alternative reading of Rev. 6-16 is that ecological disasters and the chaos of the earth and cosmos display the vulnerability of ecosystems and the universe by drawing attention to the "polluting effects of idolatrous human rule."<sup>495</sup> James L. Resseguie mentions this as follows:

The disruption of the order of the earth is an annotation of the ethical, political, and economic disorientation in their [the inhabitants of the earth] own lives ... they have created a world with their own hands.<sup>496</sup>

Stephens further supports this reading of the judgment prophecies in the Book of Revelation, saying that the visual images concerning the earth and cosmos in Rev. 6-16 reveal the vulnerability of the earth's ecosystems and of the entire universe,

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<sup>493</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 220.

<sup>496</sup> James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 226. The words in [ ] are my own addition.

brought about by the disordering impact of evil powers.<sup>497</sup>

As has been mentioned so far, these multifarious reading strategies regarding Rev. 6-16 indicate that the Premillennial Dispensationalist interpretation of these eschatological texts is not the sole genuine reading of them. Instead, there are a wide range of various conceivable ways of interpreting these texts. If we allude to Rossing's view, if we translate the Greek word οὐαὶ in Rev. 8:13; 9: 12; 11:14; 12:12; 18:10, 16, 19 not as 'woe' but as 'alas,' the apocalyptic judgements of the Book of the Revelation should be understood as the expression of "God's cry of mourning or lamentation over Earth, 'Alas for Earth.'"<sup>498</sup> In other words, "God gives voice to the Earth (the third Earth Bible principle), lamenting Rome's unjust domination over the whole Earth as a manifestation of Satan's presence."<sup>499</sup>

The multi-dimensional reading of these apocalyptic texts from the Book of Revelation indicate the possibility of various interpretations of New Testament eschatology and enable us to gain further understanding of apocalyptic texts in the Bible. Moreover, these wider readings and interpretations of the eschatological texts, especially the interpretations in relation to environmental concerns, play a significant role in helping us realize the importance of preserving the environment and the earth.

However, as pointed out above, many protestant churches in Korea understand apocalyptic judgements in the Book of Revelation by prioritizing certain doctrinal constructs, such as real ecological disasters taking place on the earth,

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<sup>497</sup> Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?* 220-21.

<sup>498</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, "Alas for Earth! Lament and Resistance in Revelation 12", in *The Earth Story in The New Testament*, ed. Norman C. Habel & Vicky Balabanski (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 180-92, especially 181.

<sup>499</sup> Rossing, "Alas for Earth!" 181.

and the complete destruction of the universe as advocated by Premillennial Dispensationalism. The interpretation based on this pre-understanding that centres on these specific doctrinal constructs hinders Korean churches in having a comprehensive understanding of the New Testament eschatology. Moreover, as Horrell, Hunt and Southgate mention in their book *Greening Paul*, the impact of these eschatological doctrinal constructs exerts “a direct or indirect effect on environmental attitudes and practices.”<sup>500</sup> Consequently, the specific doctrinal constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism, such as the eschatological-catastrophic-ecological destruction of the earth and complete annihilation of the cosmos causes great difficulties not only in maintaining richer and wider understandings of the eschatological texts of the Book of Revelation among Korean Christian congregations, but also in encouraging them to have a positive, ethical sense of nature and to engage in ecological issues in Korea.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The Premillennial Dispensationalist doctrinal construct of the imminent and total destruction of the earth's eco-systems has a decisive effect in how Korean Protestantism understands Rev. 6-16 which contains the terrible apocalyptic images such as outbreak of plague, massive earthquakes, sea pollution, and supernatural darkness of the heavenly bodies. Many Korean Protestants interpret Rev. 6-16 literally through the lens of this doctrinal construct, and envisage the entire destruction of the created order by God's punishment, in the premillennial dispensation. This understanding has played a pivotal role in shaping the belief that

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<sup>500</sup> Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 27.

“natural disasters and signs of earthly decay are indicators of the imminent end which are therefore to be welcomed.”<sup>501</sup> Thus, this theological recognition resulted not only in the idea that “the destruction of the physical elements of the cosmos must happen before the End”<sup>502</sup> but also in the denial of the possibility of multidimensional interpretive ways of reading and interpreting this eschatological text. However, as shown above, there *are* multi-dimensional interpretations of these apocalyptic texts in the Book of Revelation, where the imagery depicts a destructive judgment not of nature itself but of the evil empires that currently exercise dominion on the earth. Moreover, catastrophic images of the Book of Revelation are announcements of theophany or divine warning signals to human beings, especially, “the destroyer of the earth”. Recognizing this gives a chance to shape a reorientation of our awareness and thought concerning the intrinsic value of the earth in relationship to the eschatological visions of the New Testament.

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<sup>501</sup> Horrell, *the Bible and the Environment*, 16.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Eschatological Visions of the New Testament through the lens of Ecological Hermeneutics**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

From the previous discussion of the Korean Protestant Church's interpretive tradition of New Testament eschatological texts, particularly, 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16, it seems quite obvious that they already have certain theological presuppositions regarding New Testament eschatology. They use a certain lens – the so-called Premillennial Dispensationalist doctrinal constructs of the total destruction of the earth and the rapture – when they interpret these biblical texts. These doctrinal constructs create in the Korean Protestant Church not only a pessimistic view of the future of the earth, but they also shape the interpretive tradition of Korean congregations in such a way that New Testament apocalyptic texts which contain destructive images of the earth's ecosystems are held up as the central texts and key examples for proper understanding of New Testament Eschatology.

It is important to mention again here the environmental hermeneutics of Horrell and Conradie, which states that people's reading of the Bible is a construction, moulded by certain priorities and convictions. Horrell and Conradie suggest ways of understanding the theological-interpretive mechanisms that result from a privileging of certain texts and doctrinal constructs. As shown in the previous chapter, Korean Protestantism centralizes those two doctrinal constructs of the total destruction of the earth and the rapture, as well as certain biblical texts from 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev.

6:12-17. This hermeneutical orientation has dominated continually in the Korean Protestant Church. Indeed, this interpretive tradition is not able to fruitfully engage with the current ecological circumstances that all humanity around the world is confronting, such as global warming and the ecological predicament. Without an optimistic eschatological vision of the earth, the impetus of the Christian's engagement towards caring for the environment may be lost. Thus, it is important to reshape or shift the focus of the biblical interpretation of the key eschatological New Testament texts and doctrinal constructs, in order to reconfigure the theological-interpretive tradition of Korean Protestantism in an ecological direction. As has been seen, the New Testament does not have only one consistent view of the future of the earth. Some texts depict the annihilation of the earth, others not. Even apocalyptic texts of the New Testament ostensibly containing imagery of the total destruction of the earth can be interpreted as not necessarily referring to the annihilation of the present order and be read in various ways as mentioned above. Considering this factor, it is necessary to introduce the different perspectives on eschatological visions of the New Testament, which seem to represent not the total destruction of the entire creation but the *reconciliation* of all creation. Possible candidate texts for this particular eschatological vision of the New Testament are Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5. Other important texts – such as Col 1:15-20 – could also be included, but the time and space limitations of this current project require me to be selective (see Introduction above). These texts are not only frequently mentioned in ecological discussions but also are the favourite eschatological texts for many eco-theological interpreters of the Bible. Rom. 8:19-23 depicts the future hope of κτίσις (creation) in fulfilling the liberation of all of creation. Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5 also illustrates not rapture or total

destruction of the earth but an earth-centered New Jerusalem vision depicting a symbiotic relationship between human beings and the rest of creation. These two eschatological texts indicate the continuing existence of the current world order. Thus, I would like to re-read these eschatological texts in relation to ecological engagement. I hope that an ecological reading of these two biblical texts will contribute to a reconfiguration of the ecological direction of Korean Protestantism, as well as environmental ethics around the world.

Before addressing these two eschatological texts, this chapter will first build a set of principles to act as an ecological-hermeneutic device, that is, key doctrinal constructs for an ecological reading of the biblical texts, and will shed light on these doctrinal constructs' important function as a small doctrinal framework for interpretation and how they play a pivotal role in revealing the meaning of biblical texts. It seems necessary to build these doctrinal constructs first. This is because not only do the doctrinal constructs serve as a key guide to (re)reading the interpretive tradition which already exists, but they "bring certain texts and themes into central focus, marginalizing or resisting others."<sup>503</sup> As Horrell, Hunt and Southgate also point out, doctrinal constructs "are at one and the same time products of the tradition and the means for its critical rereading and reconfiguration."<sup>504</sup> These doctrinal constructs will be helpful not only for performing a fresh re-reading of the eschatological text of the New Testament that takes into account the world's environmental agenda, but they also encourage us to attempt a reconfiguring of Christianity's interpretive tradition, recasting the biblical story, and shaping for us a different view of ourselves and our earth communities.

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<sup>503</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 128.

<sup>504</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 43.



Secondly, this chapter addresses Rom. 8:19-23 through the lens of ecological hermeneutics. There are several exegetical issues in Rom. 8:19-23 such as the meaning of creation (κτίσις), the intertextual links with Rom. 8:19-23, the bondage to decay, the subjection to futility, and creation's suffering as birth-pangs. The following chapter then deals with exegetical issues in Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5, such as the meaning of the new heaven and the new earth, the disappearance of the sea, the idea of the New Jerusalem, and features of nature and human beings. In this exegetical work, I intend to delineate not only an ecological reading of Rom 8:19-23 and Rev. 21-22 but also the points of connection with the five doctrinal constructs.

The last task of these last two chapters is to consider the ethical dimensions of Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5 and to explain the Christian's responsible behaviour in relation to contemporary environmental issues. I aim to illustrate that there are ways in which eschatological visions in Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5 can shape new perspectives on earth communities, and advise us how to respond to current environmental challenges.

## **5.2 The Eco-Eschatological-Doctrinal Constructs of Ecological Hermeneutics: Five Principles of Eco-New Testament Eschatology**

In previous chapters, we saw how certain doctrinal constructs were very influential in shaping Korean Protestant readings of the New Testament eschatological texts in relation to nature. In attempting an ecological re-reading of the New Testament eschatological texts, we need to shape new doctrinal ideas or constructs. These doctrinal constructs or convictions themselves will be influenced by the biblical texts, shaped by biblical ideas, but also shaped by a sense of our own environmental

predicament or context. Drawing on literature from biblical scholars and eco-theologians, I will suggest these doctrinal constructs listed below to be central in ecological readings of the Bible. In fact, these doctrinal constructs are the accomplishment of critical analysis and research produced by David Horrell, Ernst Conradie and other biblical scholars, as well as eco-theologians. Moreover, this particular set of doctrinal constructs interrelate and overlap with each other. They all play pivotal roles in the interpretation of the selected eschatological texts: Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5.

### **5.2.1 Background of the Doctrinal Constructs: Hope for the Earth**

The basic interpretive method of the Bible that I intend to use focuses on the hope for the earth. The fundamental intuition of interpretation of the eschatological texts is that a Christian environmental engagement can only be empowered according to a proper understanding of eschatological hope in Christian tradition. D. F. Olivier points out that images of the eschatological future vision play a pivotal role in shaping behavioural values and attitudes and the choices human beings make. Moreover, Jürgen Moltmann mentions that Christian eschatology is not solely about end things but rather about *hope*.<sup>505</sup> In other words, images of hopeful future visions are a crucial element for engaging in environmental praxis.<sup>506</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to engage in care for the earth ourselves unless we are convinced that there is environmental future hope, not only for human beings but also for the rest of creation.<sup>507</sup> Environmental

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<sup>505</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *A Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, translated by James W. Leitch (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

<sup>506</sup> Olivier. D. F. "The Role of Eschatology and Futurology in the Quest for a Future in the Light of the Ecological crisis," *Theologia Evangelica* (22 March, 1989): 24-33, especially 29.

<sup>507</sup> John Haught, *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 196.

hopelessness in New Testament eschatology will inevitably lead us to resign our ecological responsibility towards the earth. John Haught asks that “If this final wreck and absolute extinction is the last word about the universe, then why seek now to preserve it against the inevitable void that seems to be its destiny?”<sup>508</sup> K. Nürnberger also argues that despair is the killer not only in physical life but also in terms of social and environmental engagement of the people.<sup>509</sup> Moreover, Ian G. Barbour mentions that apocalyptic eschatology “despaired of human action and placed all its hope in a supernatural intervention that would destroy.”<sup>510</sup> Indeed, “despair becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when it leads people to think that action is futile.”<sup>511</sup> Only the hopeful eschatological vision concerning the environment can be empowering in the ecological praxis of human beings. However, eschatological visions of the New Testament have sometimes not been too promising in terms of environmental praxis. As shown above, historical perspectives of Christianity concerning a future catastrophic eschatology fosters escapism and indifference towards social issues including environmental destruction. To be more specific, Christian hope sometimes has been considered “as redemption *from* the earth and not *of* the earth itself.”<sup>512</sup> Catherine Keller points out the tendency of eschatological visions in Christian tradition:

Christendom is surely not accidentally the culture whose holy book happens to culminate in a vision of the imminent devastation of the earth, the culture that has developed the technology and politics

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<sup>508</sup> John Haught, *The Promise of Nature: Ecology and Cosmic Purpose* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 24.

<sup>509</sup> K. Nürnberger, “Towards a New Heaven and a New Earth”, in *Doing Theology in Context. South African Perspectives*, ed. J.W. De Gruchy, and Villa Vicencio (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), 148.

<sup>510</sup> Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1997), 279.

<sup>511</sup> Conradie, *Hope for the Earth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 4.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

capable of Armageddon”<sup>513</sup>

There is therefore an explicit necessity to avoid this kind of eschatological tendency to avoid hopelessness for the earth. As mentioned above, certain theological themes and doctrinal constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism, such as total destruction and rapture, prioritize certain eschatological texts such as Rev. 6-16 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18 which seem to illustrate these ideas. Moreover, these doctrinal constructs affect reading and interpretation of the biblical texts. Thus, we need to shape new doctrinal constructs which depict future hope for the earth. These five doctrinal constructs below were shaped by consideration of this point that New Testament Eschatology should be focused on hope for the earth. Now I turn to outlining the five doctrinal constructs.

### **5.2.2 The First Principle: An Earth-Centred Eschatological Vision, not Rapture**

As shown above, proper understanding of the New Testament eschatology is vitally important, because eschatological visions of the New Testament not only unveil a future vision of all creation including the earth but also serve as a powerful motive of Christianity’s praxis in the present.<sup>514</sup> This being the case, what is the eschatological vision of the New Testament? And do these visions give readers an image of desolate darkness or of bright hope in the future concerning nature and the earth’s ecosystems? Unfortunately, Premillennial Dispensationalists have an escapist understanding of the eschatological vision in the New Testament. They have focused on salvation and “redemption of human beings. At worst, this has been described as

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<sup>513</sup> Catherine Keller, “Eschatology, Ecology, and a Green Ecumenacy”, *Ecotheology* 2 (1997): 95-96.

<sup>514</sup> Conradie, *Hope for the Earth*, 4.

redemption from the earth.”<sup>515</sup> Dwight L. Moody, one of the leading figures of Premillennial Dispensationalism, had a conviction that “I look on this world as wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said, ‘Moody, save all you can.’”<sup>516</sup> The mainline Korean churches and Dispensationalists around the world have the same position on Premillennial Dispensationalism. This eschatological-doctrinal construct (that the earth is a wrecked vessel) never facilitates action to protect the environment, because there is no hope for the earth’s future. As Conradie said, “without hope, an environmental praxis will lose its impetus and will fight a losing battle.”<sup>517</sup> According to David Hallman, one reason for the contemporary environmental crisis is “unmitigated despair.”<sup>518</sup> Therefore, there is a question: Where can Christians get a clear sense of an eschatological vision of hope for the earth in the New Testament while such hopelessness towards the future of the earth is dominant?

Actually, the topic of the relationship between heaven and the earth brings about the ongoing difficult theological problem. The problem is whether or not the earth should be devalued as compared to heaven. According to the Earth Bible Team, the term “heaven,” שָׁמַיִם in Hebrew and οὐρανός in Greek, was mainly referred to with three meanings: “the skies as the upper portion of the physical universe<sup>519</sup> ....the locus...where God reigns<sup>520</sup> ... a euphemism for God”.<sup>521</sup> However, western

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<sup>515</sup> Ernst M. Conradie, “What Is the Place of the Earth in God’s Economy? Doing Justice to Creation, Salvation and Consummation”, in *Christian Faith and the Earth: Current Paths and Emerging Horizons in Ecotheology*, ed. Ernst M. Conradie, Sigurd Bergmann, Celia Deane-Drummond, and Denis Edwards (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 73.

<sup>516</sup> Moody, “Return of Our Lord”, in *the American Evangelicals, 1800-1900*, 185.

<sup>517</sup> Conradie, “What Is the Place of the Earth in God’s Economy?”, in *Christian Faith and the Earth*, 74.

<sup>518</sup> David G. Hallman, *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994), 8.

<sup>519</sup> Gen. 1:1-8.

<sup>520</sup> Ps. 2:4; 8:2; 11:4; Acts 7:55-56.

<sup>521</sup> Mt. 3:2. Also see The Earth Bible Team, “Ecojustice Hermeneutics: Reflections and Challenges”, in *The Earth Story in the New Testament* ed. Norman C. Habel and Vicky Balabanski (London and New

theologians have understood the relationship between earth and heaven from a mainly dualistic viewpoint. Heaven is God's dwelling place and therefore the holy eternal true home of believers which God has designated for them.<sup>522</sup> On the other hand, earth is not only the realm of mortals, perishable, depraved, corrupt, and inferior,<sup>523</sup> but also only a temporary waypoint or barren land which human beings, especially Christians, have to leave.<sup>524</sup> Conradie observes that "Reinforced by apocalyptic images of the imminent destruction of the world in the Biblical roots of Christianity, Christian hope has often been understood as redemption *from* the earth and not *of* the earth itself."<sup>525</sup> Therefore, the purpose of Christian living in the earth is not to take care of it, but to prepare for rapture or life after death in order to dwell with God in heaven on God's judgment day. Moreover, Jürgen Moltmann says that "The prayer for the coming of the kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven' was replaced by the longing 'to go to heaven' oneself."<sup>526</sup>

As a matter of fact, this theological orientation of a dualistic viewpoint on the theme of the earth and heaven has been influenced by western theological traditions of reading the Biblical texts ever since St. Augustine. According to Joseph Sittler, western theological tradition was heavily influenced by Hellenistic dualism after Augustine. This Hellenistic dualism's influence resulted in a misunderstanding of salvation, namely, that salvation is to escape *from* the earth - which is disposable,

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York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>522</sup> The Earth Bible Team, "Ecojustice Hermeneutics: Reflections and Challenges", 3.

<sup>523</sup> Norman Habel, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles", in *Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1*, ed. Norman Habel and Shirley Wurst (Cleveland, Ohio: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 40-41.

<sup>524</sup> The Earth Bible Team, "Ecojustice Hermeneutics: Reflections and Challenges", 4.

<sup>525</sup> Conradie, *Hope for the Earth*, 6.

<sup>526</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl, from the German *Gott in der Schöpfung: Ökologische Schöpfungslehre* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 181.

finite, and concrete.<sup>527</sup>

However, Irenaeus, one of the Fathers of the early Church, thought that the incarnation, ministry, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ wields strong influence towards all creatures, including the earth, and enables the continuation of the promise of grace towards nature. Sittler commented on the earth's state by summarizing Irenaeus's view as follows:

In Irenaeus... there are not two orders of goodness, but only one. All goodness, whether it belongs to this world or to the final consummation, is a manifestation of the grace of God. It is the same grace of God which sustains nature even in its fallen state and which confers salvation in Jesus Christ. The residual goodness in nature can even be regarded as an anticipation or foretaste of that salvation. The same... appears also in Irenaeus' attitude towards the sacraments as compared with that of the church of the Middle Ages. For Irenaeus the union of spiritual and material benefit in the Eucharist symbolizes the ultimate unity of nature and grace implied in Christian salvation....<sup>528</sup>

Today many biblical scholars provide some new types of relationship between heaven and the earth in the New Testament that depict a more harmonious relationship. For example, Alan Cadwallader argues that until now Christians read the Bible from the perspective of western dualism which is not passed down from the Jewish Christians. Actually, "The heavenly country is not another place elevated and removed. Rather it is a description of a way of engaging Earth, a way marked by respect for Earth's hospitality and affirmation of Earth's value."<sup>529</sup> In addition, Elmer

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<sup>527</sup> Joseph Sittler, *Evocations of Grace: The Writings of Joseph Sittler on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics*, ed. Steven Bouma-Prediger and Peter Bakken (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 38-50.

<sup>528</sup> Quoted from Joseph Sittler in *Evocations of Grace*, 42.

<sup>529</sup> Alan H. Cadwallader, "Earth as Host or Stranger?: Reading Hebrews 11 from Diasporan

Flor considers the author of Ephesians 1 to shed light on the powerful impact of Jesus's redemptive ministry towards earth and heaven. He argues that "all things in heaven and things on Earth - including human beings - are to be gathered up and reunited in Christ as their head."<sup>530</sup> Furthermore, Richard Bauckham sees the New Jerusalem vision in the book of Revelation as showing us that the Kingdom of God descends from heaven so that human beings may dwell with God for eternity.<sup>531</sup> Barbara R. Rossing also takes a similar view. She suggests an outline of the earth's relationship with heaven in Rev. 21-22 in her book, *The Rapture Exposed*, saying that "'Heaven' is not mentioned again...after Revelation 21:2...This is because God's throne moves down to earth...a wonderfully earth-centered vision of our future, a vision of hope for this world."<sup>532</sup> Thus, instead of the rapture idea, where few humans get rescued prior to the doomsday of the earth, the emphasis here is on an earth-centred eschatological vision of the New Testament. This principle is the central idea in an ecological re-reading of the New Testament which must focus not on the rescue of a few elected human beings but rather must focus on the fate of the whole earth community.

### **5.2.3. The Second Principle: God's Covenant with the Entire Creation, expressed in particular through the Incarnation of Christ.**

The flood narrative in Genesis 6:5 - 9:29 gives God's punishment towards the world through the flood and God's promise in the covenant with Noah. When we think about

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Experience", in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, 165.

<sup>530</sup> Elmer Flor, "The Cosmic Christ and Ecojustice in the New Cosmos (Ephesians 1)", in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, 144.

<sup>531</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010), 176.

<sup>532</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004), 148.



the Noahic covenant, our concern is often with human beings' salvation (Noah and his descendants) from the flood. We think that what this sense of the Noahic covenant implies is that the main purpose of the covenant is to bless Noah and his sons and to give them all living creatures as their food (Gen. 9:2-3: "The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth... Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you). But, the promise of the Noahic covenant also contains all living creatures. Gen. 9:10-11 describes a "covenant with you and your descendants...and with every living animal, and every animal of the earth with you." Many biblical scholars have focused on God's eternal covenant after the Flood (Gen. 8-9) as concerning mainly human beings such as Noah and his family, and not as concerning the importance of all of God's creatures. For example, Walter Brueggemann illustrated that the starting point of God's eternal covenant are the words at Gen. 8:1, "God remembered Noah. God remembered."<sup>533</sup> But David Horrell<sup>534</sup> and John Olley indicate that the point missing in the attention Brueggemann and other biblical scholars have paid to this is that "His [Brueggemann's] theological focus is on God and chaos, especially as experienced by humans, by the people of God...animals are an appendage, words are used but no attention is paid to them."<sup>535</sup> Moreover, John Calvin, one of the main figures of the Protestant reformers, made the same mistake. As a matter of fact, he opens the possibility of the inclusion of living creatures in Noah's covenant. However, his focus point in this covenant is not living creatures themselves, but the superiority of human beings with an anthropocentric viewpoint:

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<sup>533</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: In Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 85.

<sup>534</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 44.

<sup>535</sup> John W. Olley, "Mixed Blessings for Animals: The Contrasts of Genesis 9", in ed. Norman C. Habel and Shirey Wurst, *The Earth Story in Genesis*, 137.

Although the favour which the Lord promises extends also to animals, yet it is not in vain that he addresses himself only to men, who, by the sense of faith, are able to perceive this benefit. We enjoy the heaven and the air in common with the beasts, and draw the same vital breath; but it is no common privilege, that God directs his word to us; whence we may learn with what paternal love he pursues us.<sup>536</sup>

As such, many theologians have mainly paid attention to Noah and his descendants in this covenant, not animals and the earth. Olley goes on to make an important point as regards the relationship between humans and the earth in this covenant, saying that “The secondary start, the ‘sign of the covenant’ (Gen. 9.12), involves ‘you [Noah and his family] and every living creature’; but the conclusion (Gen. 9. 17) is simply ‘all flesh that is on earth’. There is no separation or hierarchy; rather, there is a bonding together on ‘earth’.”<sup>537</sup> Moreover, John Barton points out that the focal point of the cosmic covenant is not people’s prosperity, but the correlation between humanity’s behaviour and the condition of the rest of creation. When human beings behaved appropriately, the entire creation flourished with the help of God. However, in the opposite case, it brought about conflict and disordering of the created world through God’s punishment.<sup>538</sup> This account is an important manifestation of rereading the biblical texts through the voice or eyes of the earth. As Horrell says, “the whole creation is bound in covenant to God.”<sup>539</sup> Thus, God’s covenant covers the entirety of creation. We need to pay attention to the point that living creatures should be included in this covenant equally (Gen. 9:15).

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<sup>536</sup> John Calvin, *Genesis I*, translated and edited by John King M.A (Southampton, UK: The Camelot Press, 1578), 297.

<sup>537</sup> Olley, “Mixed Blessings for Animals”, 134.

<sup>538</sup> John Barton, “Reading the Prophets from an Environmental Perspective”, in *Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate, and Francesca Stavrakopoulou (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 46-55.

<sup>539</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 133.

Another important theological theme for creation theology is the redemptive ministry of Christ, including his crucifixion and resurrection. The topic is how the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and his crucifixion brought about active debate in Christian history in relation to how the crucifixion of Christ affects the entire world.

Matt. 1:23 declares Jesus is Ἐμμανουήλ, that is, “God is with us.” Disciples of Jesus Christ found what this meant in the wisdom tradition. According to Denis Edwards, “Wisdom (gk. ‘Sophia’) is personified as God’s companion in the creating and sustaining of all things (Prov. 8:22-31; Sir 24:3-7; Wis. 8:1-4).”<sup>540</sup> The early Christians considered Jesus to be the wisdom of God who created the entire universe. The entire life of Jesus Christ, including his redemptive ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection shows us the fullness of God’s wisdom. Philo of Alexandria, Edwards notes, applied “both Wisdom (Sophia) and Word (Logos) language to speak of God’s creating and revealing presence.”<sup>541</sup> The Gospel of John and the Letter to the Hebrews also expressed Jesus Christ as the Word of God (John. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-3). Moreover, Athanasius of Alexandria understood Jesus Christ as the Word and Wisdom as follows: “he [Jesus] is other than things that come to be, and is rather the One True Word, Radiance, and Wisdom of the Father, of which all things that come to be participate and are sanctified.”<sup>542</sup> According to Athanasius, the real purpose that the wisdom and word of God became flesh through Jesus Christ is for reconciling and transforming both human creatures and the earth.<sup>543</sup> As mentioned above, the transforming of not only human beings but also the entire universe is at the centre of

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<sup>540</sup> Denis Edwards, “Creation Seen in the Light of Christ: A Theological Sketch”, in *Creation is Groaning: Biblical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Mary L. Coloe (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>541</sup> Edwards, “Creation Seen in the Light of Christ”, 4.

<sup>542</sup> ‘Athanasius, Orations Against the Arians 1:46’, translated in Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 103.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid. 157.

God's covenantal commitment to creation expressed through the incarnation of Christ. This principle suggests that we should not think of God's covenant as applying to human beings only, or of Jesus Christ's coming as a human being focusing on only human salvation, but more broadly, as being God's covenant with the whole of creation, and as Christ entering the whole of creation as flesh for the salvation of the entire universe.

#### **5.2.4. The Third Principle: Humanity as Part of the Community of Creation**

The western theological tradition has generally considered that human beings are unique and superior over other inferior creatures. This is because a clear manifestation of the creation story in Genesis, especially, Gen. 1:26-28, depicts not only human beings as being made in God's image, but also humanity's dominion over nature. The history of interpretation of the Bible was constructed in such strong anthropocentric doctrinal constructs.<sup>544</sup> This being so, the Earth Bible Team has critiqued any "anthropocentrism and a hierarchy of power that is based on an economic model of the ancient world" in the Bible.<sup>545</sup> However, as Horrell points out, this theological position connotes the radical rejection of this Christian theological tradition which can lead us to leave Christian orthodoxy. To avoid this theological side effect, I think that the important point is to find a proper anthropocentric-theological model, because it is undeniable that current human activities towards the earth can wield a strong influence either positively or negatively.<sup>546</sup> Stephen Webb commented on this, stating "The world is shrinking and humans are in charge of all of it, for better

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<sup>544</sup> David M. Russell, *The "New Heavens and New Earth": Hope for the Creation in Jewish Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (Philadelphia, IL: Visionary Press, 1996), 39.

<sup>545</sup> The Earth Bible Team, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles", in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, 42-53, especially 50.

<sup>546</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 130.

or worse. We cannot shirk our responsibility for nature. Nature is largely under our control. The only question is how we will exercise that control.”<sup>547</sup> Francis Watson argues that anthropocentrism is inevitable for human beings, “since ... our primary perspective on the world is a human one, it is bounded and shaped by the determinants of specifically human existence.”<sup>548</sup>

The Greek dispute concerning anthropocentrism goes back to at least “Xenophanes in the sixth century BC, and [was] later taken up by the Academics and Stoics.”<sup>549</sup> The Greek dispute was over whether humanity has the form of the gods or if the earth was made for human benefit. At the end of 3rd century AD, Celsus applied the view of the Greek Academic philosophers in order to criticize Christianity’s belief system that humans are at the centre of the universe. To refute this view, Origen applied Stoic arguments to justify an anthropocentric world view.<sup>550</sup> Actually, the first usage of the term ‘anthropocentrism’ in English appears in the writing of Ernst Haeckel, a German biologist, when he pointed out two main faults in the Mosaic narrative of creation. The first fault is to think that the earth is the centre of the universe (the geocentric fault). The other one is to think that the only reason of creation’s existence is to serve human beings (the anthropocentric fault).<sup>551</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to define exactly what anthropocentrism means, because there are various

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<sup>547</sup> Stephen H. Webb, *Good Eating* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), 240.

<sup>548</sup> Francis Watson, “In The Beginning: Irenaeus, Creation and the Environment”, in *Ecological Hermeneutics*, 129.

<sup>549</sup> David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume One Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2012), xvi.

<sup>550</sup> Origen, *Origen: Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 4.74-99; Henry Chadwick, “Origen, Celsus and the Stoa”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 48 (1947), 36-7.

<sup>551</sup> Ernst Haeckel, *The History of Creation, or the Development of the Earth and its Inhabitants by the Action of Natural Causes*, trans. E. Ray Lankester (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883), 38-9.

interpretations of the term.<sup>552</sup> There are many systematic theologians, biblical scholars, and eco-theologians who carefully delineate the term anthropocentrism. Horrell distinguishes a certain kind of anthropocentrism, a so-called “instrumental anthropocentrism”, which was first identified by David Clough.<sup>553</sup> Clough compared at least two kinds of anthropocentrism: teleological anthropocentrism, and an instrumental one. According to him, teleological anthropocentrism is that “humanity is God’s chief concern in creation and redemption.”<sup>554</sup> On the other hand, instrumental anthropocentrism is that humanity plays a pivotal role as “a means to the freedom of bondage of all creation”<sup>555</sup> as shown in Rom 8. In other words, “humans have a central place in the process by which God redeems the whole creation.”<sup>556</sup> Horrell and Clough consider instrumental anthropocentrism to be the requisite anthropocentrism that the biblical texts suggest and that is needed in the current ecological context.<sup>557</sup> But we need to keep in mind that a significant role of human activities for God’s redemptive work does not mean to justify human’s arrogance or to downplay other creatures. Instead, this is the declaration that human beings and the rest of creation are interconnected inevitably to each other. The earth is the source of supply which provides things we need such as air, water, food, and shelter. Humanity’s praxis has a strong influence on current environmental issues both negatively and positively. Thus, we need to emphasize the interconnectedness of humans and the earth, instead of a

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<sup>552</sup> For the definition of several different types of anthropocentrism such as teleological, perspectival, instrumental, metaethical, and ethical anthropocentrism, see, David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume One Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2012), xvi-xx.

<sup>553</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 131.

<sup>554</sup> Clough, *On Animals*, xx.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid. xx.

<sup>556</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 131.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid, and Clough, *On Animals*, xvi-xxiii. Christopher Southgate also rejects teleological anthropocentrism. See, Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 92-115.

human mastery of the earth. This principle proposes not only we, human beings, to be the one group of earth's residents, but rather that there is a group sharing a common destiny with all earth communities, and that the ultimate role of human beings in relation to nature is to take care of the earth and liberate all creation from bondage to decay.

#### **5.2.5. The Fourth Principle of the Self-Expression (Voice) of Creation: Silence, Groaning, and Praise to God**

The main focus of the principle just mentioned is that creation itself has many voices and that God listens to these voices. In other words, the main point is that all forms of creatures on the earth have their own voice, like humanity's, but different.<sup>558</sup> These days, many people - not only theologians but also biologists and ecologists - have a growing awareness that the earth is not a machine, but a living organism which is controlled by rigid law. This principle deeply correlates with "The Principle of Voice" of the Earth Bible team.<sup>559</sup> The members of the Earth Bible team pointed out the biblical-interpretive tradition of Christianity that tended towards the dualistic-interpretive mindset that "the language of the text gives rise to this kind of differentiation between 'voiced' humans and the presumed 'voiceless' members of the wider Earth community."<sup>560</sup> They criticized this dualistic-interpretive mindset, arguing that passages referring to God's creation blessing or praising God (as in Ps. 103.22), have

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<sup>558</sup> Paul Santmire, "The Two Voices of Nature: Further Encounters with the Integrity of Nature," in *Eco-Reformation: Grace and Hope for a Planet in Peril*, ed. Lisa E. Dahill and James B. Martin-Schramm (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 77.

<sup>559</sup> The Earth Bible Team, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles", in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, 46-7.

<sup>560</sup> The Earth Bible Team, "Guiding Ecojustice Principles", 47.

been dismissed as poetic license.<sup>561</sup> Paul Santmire also states that the biblical scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries discounted this theological theme (voice of Earth) in a sense as poetic word or an expression of some primeval sensibility.<sup>562</sup> Richard Bauckham likewise criticized contemporary biblical theologians' orientation towards supposing the idea of creation's praise to God as being "merely a poetic fancy or some kind of primitive animism."<sup>563</sup> However, Bauckham and many other biblical scholars hold that the biblical messages explicitly or implicitly affirm creation to have its own voice. According to Samuel Rayan, many biblical texts illustrate that silence is the expression of creation speaking with its own voice as follows:

The cherished language of symbols is silence. The earth speaks in the eloquent silence of hills and trees. 'Silence, my soul,' said Tagore, 'these trees are prayers.' A language the earth loves to speak is the silence of night and the silence of the womb, the silence of seeds as they sprout and the silence of buds smiling into blossoms. The earth speaks, and God speaks too, in the silence of loving looks, of tears shed and unshed and of hands gently... The earth speaks in the quiet language of many colours... and of running water... But the earth communicates also in the roar of the sea, the warble of birds and brooks, the murmur of the breeze. The heavens in their blue silences and their thunderclouds declare the glory of God. No speech, no words, no voice heard, but the call goes on throughout the universe (Ps. 19.3-4). And 'deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts.' (Ps. 42.7)<sup>564</sup>

In a sense, this is an important implication of that retrieval of a cosmic lamentation of earth in Rev. 12:12 by Barbara R. Rossing. In various versions of the Bible, Rossing analysed the Greek word οὐαί, which was normally translated as "woe" and illustrated

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>562</sup> Santmire, "The Two Voices of Nature", 77.

<sup>563</sup> Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 176-77.

<sup>564</sup> Samuel Rayan, "The Earth is the Lord's", in *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, ed. David Hallman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 133.



that “God stands over against Earth, pronouncing judgment or a curse onto Earth”<sup>565</sup>, translating it into “alas” which portrays the sympathy, lamentation, and concern of earth.<sup>566</sup> That is, she found a different sense for οὐαὶ in Rev. 12:12.

Creation’s voice also expresses creation’s worship and praise of God. The main instances that demonstrate creation’s praise towards God are found in Psalms (Pss 69:34; 96:11-12; 98:7-8; 103:22; 148; 150:6; Phil 2:10; Rev 5:13). Bauckham mentioned that the “creation worships God just by being itself, as God made it, existing for God’s glory.”<sup>567</sup> Karl Barth stated the similar viewpoint that even without human help, creation can praise and worship God. This is Barth’s comment concerning creation’s praise of God:

When man accepts his destiny in Jesus Christ ... he is only like a late-comer slipping shamefacedly into creation’s choir in heaven and earth, which has never ceased its praise, but merely suffered and signed, as it still does, that in inconceivable folly and ingratitude its living centre man does not hear its voice, its response, its echoing of the divine glory, or rather hears it in a completely perverted way, and refuses to co-operate in the jubilation which surrounds him.<sup>568</sup>

Horrell responds to Barth’s view of creation saying “[this] reminds us both of the ‘suffering and sighing’ of creation – an echo of Rom. 8:19-23 – and of the human failure to praise ... contributing to a notion of ecological sin: creation’s cry of praise is

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<sup>565</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, “Alas for Earth! Lament and Resistance in Revelation 12”, in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Vicky Balabanski (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 183.

<sup>566</sup> Rossing, “Alas for Earth!”, 183. See also 181-84.

<sup>567</sup> Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom*, 177; T. E. Fretheim, “Nature’s Praise of God in the Psalms”, *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987): 16-30; Scott Hoezee, *Remember Creation: God’s World of Wonder and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 50-52.

<sup>568</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.1: The Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 648.

at the same time a rebuke of humanity's acquisitive self-absorption."<sup>569</sup> This doctrinal construct, the voice of creation, gives rise to readings and interpretations of biblical texts in a sense in which the texts contain the voice of the earth community, and give a chance to retrieve various self-expressions of the earth community: silence, groaning, and praise to God. Moreover, this doctrinal construct has a good standpoint in terms of ethical relevance that contributes to reminding us of various non-human creatures' intrinsic value and beauty, and even substantiates humanity's moral imperative to take care of the abundance and diversity of creation.

#### **5.2.6. The Fifth Principle: The Vision of the Peaceable Non-Predatory Kingdom of God (New Creation)**

Another important theme in the eschatological vision of the New Testament is the Kingdom of God. What is the character of the empire of God's kingdom and the role of Jesus Christ in terms of the relationships between all creation, including human beings and nature? Traditional viewpoints of the kingdom of God mainly focus on God's rulership over people and society. However, according to David M. Rhoads, the Kingdom of God in the Bible depicts the reconciliation and liberation of all creation through Jesus's messianic role.<sup>570</sup> Richard Bauckham notes the importance of Christ's redemptive ministry, saying that Jesus' identity and role as the messianic Son of God had a major impact on all creation, including the human relationship with wild animals.<sup>571</sup> Indeed, some eschatological texts in the Old Testament such as Isaiah

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<sup>569</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 133-34.

<sup>570</sup> David M. Rhoads, "Who Will Speak for the Sparrow? Eco-Justice Criticism of the New Testament", in *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God*, ed. Sharon H. Ringe and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 73.

<sup>571</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 112.

11:6-9 and 65:17-25 illustrate the Kingdom of God by depicting harmonious relationships within the animal world, including human beings. Many scholars of Isa. 40-66 consider that Isa. 65:17-25 was influenced by Isa. 1-39.<sup>572</sup> Moreover, according to Richard L. Schultz, Isa. 65:17-25 illustrates a return to the primeval conditions of Eden as an eschatological vision.<sup>573</sup> In fact, we can see this kind of Kingdom of God in some eschatological texts in the New Testament such as Mk 1:12-13. This eschatological text, according to Richard Bauckham, portrays the peaceful coexistence of animals. The important words in this passage are “he [Jesus] was with the wild animals.” Traditionally, the relationship envisaged between humanity and wild animals contains an enmity toward each other. This state of enmity between humans and wild animals resulted from the violence of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1:29-30. This sin of humans distorted the created relationship between humans as well as between humans and non-human creations, including the wild animals. It is why the earth contained all kinds of violence before the flood (Gen 6:11, 13).<sup>574</sup> However, the flood could not be the final solution. Thus, God gave the Noahic covenant which allowed killing animals for food as a compromise.<sup>575</sup> Thus, the enmity between humans and animals expanded as time went by. We can find the imagery for the solution to this problem in Isaiah 11: 6-9,<sup>576</sup> which shows us the hope of peace

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<sup>572</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 1-7; John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, the Eighth-century Prophet: His Times & His Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 67-69.

<sup>573</sup> Richard L. Schultz, “Intertextuality, Canon, and ‘Undecidability’: Understanding Isaiah’s ‘New Heavens and New Earth’ (Isaiah 65:17-25),” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20.1 (2010): 32-34.

<sup>574</sup> Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 118.

<sup>575</sup> Actually, in the creation story, both humans and animals were on a vegetarian diet.

<sup>576</sup> Isaiah 11:6-9: The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters

between humans and wild animals that would be brought about by the messianic king and his righteous rule. Isaiah 11:6-9 has sometimes been read as speaking simply to the reconciliation of relationships between humans and animals, as well as between animals and animals, without taking into account the enmity between the human world and the wild animals. According to Bauckham, “it depicts peace between the human world, with its domesticated animals (lamb, kid, calf, bullock, cow), and the wild animals (wolf, leopard, lion, bear, poisonous snakes) that were normally perceived as threats both to human livelihood (dependent on the domestic animals) and to human life.”<sup>577</sup> Mark 1:12-13, a text closely related in eschatological terms to Isaiah 11:1-9, can be read as portraying Jesus’s peaceful companionship with the wild animals. Jesus Christ does not try to change their wild nature. Instead, not only does Jesus let them live in their wilderness in peace but he also affirms them as creatures of God which share the world with human beings in peace.<sup>578</sup>

The imagery of Jesus “with” the wild animals in Mark 1:13 points us to the possibility of living with other animals (all creatures) in peace. After Jesus’ inauguration of the Kingdom of God, the eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God will be completed in the future. However, people can begin to realize it in the present by respecting wild animals and preserving their habitat with great respect in order to fulfil God’s eschatological purpose of ecological renewal in the present time. These various doctrinal constructs can, I suggest, help to reorientate an engagement with biblical texts in relation to contemporary issues of environmental care. I therefore turn next to a reading of key biblical texts that might also stand at the centre of such an

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cover the sea. (NRSV)

<sup>577</sup> Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures*, 125.

<sup>578</sup> Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 129.

ecologically focused biblical interpretation.

### **5.3. Main Biblical Texts in The Eco-Eschatological-Doctrinal Constructs of Ecological Hermeneutics: Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5**

This section aims to seek eco-theological engagement with key eschatological texts of the New Testament which envisage the future of the earth - Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-7, 22:1-5 - in light of these doctrinal constructs listed above while taking into account the contemporary ecological situation and its demands.

There are strong reasons for focusing on these two texts in particular. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the letter to the Romans has been influential in emergent Protestant theology. Martin Luther and John Calvin, the influential Protestant reformers, were no exception. The letter of Romans was of significant influence for Calvin. According to Gary Neal Hansen, Calvin not only wrote his book *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, based on the content of Romans, but also shaped his theological framework through his interpretation of this text.<sup>579</sup> Martin Luther also changed and shaped his theology, and especially his soteriology, due largely to the influence of Paul's letters, especially Romans and Galatians. Luther himself mentioned the importance of Romans, saying Romans "is really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul."<sup>580</sup> Following his influence, the

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<sup>579</sup> Gary Heal Hansen, "Door and Passageway: Calvin's use of Romans as Hermeneutical and Theological Guide", in *Reformation Reading of Romans* ed, Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2008), 77-94.

<sup>580</sup> Martin Luther, 'Preface to the Letter of S. Paul to the Romans', in his "New Testament in German", cited in Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans; A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster and John Knox Press, 1994), 1. The quotation is from *Luther's Works*, Vol. 35 (1960): 365.

majority of New Testament scholars have focused on the topic of the salvation of human beings when they interpret Romans.<sup>581</sup> However, the epistle of Romans, undoubtedly one of the undisputed letters of the Apostle Paul, also gives a story of an eschatological vision of creation, particularly in Rom. 8:18-23. In general, this eschatological text is the most frequently considered text in the Pauline literature for addressing the relationship between human and non-human beings. Brendan Byrne mentions that this passage is the “only time in his extant letters Paul considers human beings in relation to the nonhuman created world.”<sup>582</sup> Horrell, Hunt and Southgate also point out that Rom. 8:19-23 and Col. 1:15-20 are the two *most* important Pauline texts for the ecological agenda.<sup>583</sup> John Bolt confirms Rom. 8:19-23 to be the most frequently cited eschatological text, saying that it has become “little more than a mantra for Christian environmentalism.”<sup>584</sup> Bolt’s comment is useful for indicating the importance of this eschatological text, even though he effectively says that people simply quote it as a proof-text for environmental care, without really probing its meaning. Indeed, this eschatological text can be a good source with which to lay the cornerstone for shaping “an ecological engagement with the Pauline tradition.”<sup>585</sup>

Indeed, Rom. 8:19-23 contains the images of the groaning of creation and the future hope. To be more specific, this text addresses important theological themes in the eschatological vision of New Testament such as creation (κτίσις) and the relationship between human beings and the future hope of creation. Harry Hahne

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<sup>581</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 74, 123.

<sup>582</sup> Brendan J. Byrne, *Reckoning with Romans: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Gospel* (GNS 18; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1986), 165.

<sup>583</sup> Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 64.

<sup>584</sup> John Bolt, “The Relation Between Creation and Redemption in Romans 8:18-27”, *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (1995): 34-51, particularly 34. The third chapter contains the content of reading of Col. 1:15-20 in some degree.

<sup>585</sup> Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 64.

finds in Rom. 8:19-23's parallels with Jewish apocalyptic tradition that not only human beings but also the whole of creation will be liberated from bondage to decay and redeemed not by total destruction of creation and re-creation but by a process of renewal.<sup>586</sup>

This understanding of the future hope of human beings and creation contains important ethical implications. Because, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, our conviction of an eschatological vision shapes, guides, and inspires our thinking and behaviour as well as creating our ethical imperatives. As Victor Paul Furnish says with regard to Paul's letters, "Eschatology is not just one motif among numerous others, but helps to provide the fundamental perspective within which everything else is viewed."<sup>587</sup> Indeed, our understanding of the continuity of the present world in the eschatological future vision in Rom. 8:19-23 suggests human beings' clear responsibility to act in ways that are harmonised with the future eschatological vision.

Thus, considering these scholars' opinions and conclusions above, it would seem appropriate to examine Rom. 8:19-25 in ways that take into account the ecological implications of the text. I hope that reading Rom. 8:19-23 through the doctrinal framework of ecological hermeneutics will reconfigure not only the interpretive tradition of the eschatological texts of the New Testament for Korean Christians but that of Christians all over the world, and enable us to engage with the ecological agenda more broadly.

Moreover, the Book of Revelation profoundly influences not only Korean Christians but also Christians around the world in shaping pessimistic and negative

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<sup>586</sup> Harry A. Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Nature in Romans 8: 19-22 and Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 215-16.

<sup>587</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1968), 214.

views on creation and the earth, as shown above. In particular, the catastrophic images in the Book of Revelation inculcate a negative tendency in believers towards nature, namely, that the destruction of the present creation and ecosystem is an unavoidable event ordained by God.<sup>588</sup> Thus, the Book of Revelation has many times been used and misused to justify environmental destruction. Luke T. Johnson's remark that the history of the interpretation of Revelation is largely a story of tragic misinterpretation is apposite here.<sup>589</sup> Considering this point, I propose that a key eschatological vision of the Book of Revelation is not the apocalyptic-environmental disaster but the ecologically recovered hope of the New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21:1-7 and 22:1-5, interpreted as a representative of a reconciliation of all relationships between human and non-human creation. The New Jerusalem in Revelation presents a positive ecological vision and has been a major resource for eco-theological interpreters of the book of Revelation. The story of the eschatological vision of the New Jerusalem begins in Rev. 21:1 and extends to 22:5. The New Jerusalem vision of Revelation 21-22 is an earth-centered vision that shows us the eschatological dwelling place of God to be on earth and not on another planet or only in a spiritual realm.<sup>590</sup>

#### **5.4. Eschatological Visions in Rom. 8:19-23**

##### **5.4.1. General Description of Rom. 8:19-23**

Romans 8:19-23 is the climax of Paul's opening arguments in Rom. 1-8. Basically, this passage contains central ideas such as emancipation from slavery (vv. 2, 21),

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<sup>588</sup> Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven*, 238-39.

<sup>589</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 573.

<sup>590</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 148.



resurrection (vv. 11, 23), sonship and adoption (vv. 14-23), and suffering (vv. 18-26).<sup>591</sup> In Rom. 8:18-30, Paul extends the theological theme of the current suffering with hopeful expectation and future glory, which was dealt with in 5:2-4. Paul finished his argument in Rom. 8:12-17 with a statement that believers share in the present suffering of Christ and will share in the future glory of Christ (v. 17). Paul then sheds light on the intertwined relationship between the present suffering and the hope for future glory throughout these passages (vv. 19-23).<sup>592</sup> Verse 18 is a thesis statement that presents suffering as a necessary prelude for the future glory of believers in Christ. The rest of the passage (vv. 19-30) consists of three subsections given as evidence for this thesis, as follows. Vv. 19-22: the entire creation now groans in suffering, but, this is a forward-moving divine process, the climax of which is liberation and glory.<sup>593</sup> Vv. 23-25: Believers groan as they await in hope the future redemption of their bodies. Vv. 26-27: the groaning of the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Vv. 28-30: there is confident assurance of the approaching future glory.<sup>594</sup>

#### **5.4.2 A Brief Survey of Ecological Readings of Rom. 8: 19-23**

Along with ecological concerns, many New Testament scholars and ecological theologians have, in recent decades, endeavoured to explore the various theological themes of Rom. 8: 19-23 in a way in which the text might contribute positively to theological and ethical engagement with the earth-threatening ecological crisis. Now we turn to five examples along a time-ordered sequence of engaging in eco-

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<sup>591</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary Romans 1-8* Volumes 38A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 466.

<sup>592</sup> Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 174.

<sup>593</sup> Adams, *Constructing the World*, 174.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.* 174.

theological exegetical work that contributes to my interpretation on Rom. 8:19-23. There are seven biblical scholars that I want to discuss as follows: Brendan Byrne, Robert Jewett, Harry A. Hahne, Jonathan Moo, and David G. Horrell with Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate.

#### **5.4.2.1 Brendan Byrne, SJ (1996, 2000, and 2010)<sup>595</sup>**

In his insightful article on Romans 8:18-22, Brendan Byrne introduces his argument that after Augustine's interpretation of the Pauline corpus, the western theological and interpretive tradition has been dominated by the theological theme of justification by faith, stressing the relationship between human beings and God.<sup>596</sup> Byrne read and interpreted Rom. 8:18-22 from the perspective of the earth, applying the ecojustice principles of the Earth Bible project. Byrne was convinced that the intertextual link of Rom. 8:19-23 is with Gen. 1-3. He pointed out that Rom 8.19-22 consists of the sin story (negative past) and the grace story (positive future). According to Byrne, the sin story means the earth is subdued by the sin of Adam who is representative of all human beings and who finally guided all creation into the situation of subjection to futility. In this sin story, the human race, and Adam specifically, is the subduer of the earth. Byrne did not follow the majority opinion that the subduer is God. On the other hand, the grace story in Rom. 8:19-22 proposes that in and through Christ, who is the last Adam and the sacrificial self-giving figure, human beings become a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5. 18; Gal. 6. 15) who can take care of the entire universe, exercising a

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<sup>595</sup> Brendan Byrne, SJ, *Romans: Sacra Pagina 6* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1996); "Creation Groaning: An Earth Bible Reading of Romans 8. 18-22", in *Reading from the Perspective of Earth* ed. Norman C. Habel (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000), 193-203; "An Ecological Reading of Rom 8. 19-22: Possibilities and Hesitations", in *Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate, and Francesca Stavrakopoulou (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 83-93

<sup>596</sup> Byrne, "Creation Groaning", 194.

“custodianship of the material world”<sup>597</sup> through acts imitating the sacrificial life of Jesus Christ.

An interesting point is that Byrne pays attention to the usage of the words “the redemption of the body (τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν)” in verse 23, implying the continuity of the current physical world. Byrne thinks that Paul intentionally avoids using the word ‘resurrection’ (ἀνάστασις) in verses 10-11 - earlier than 8:19-23 - because this word inevitably implies the rebirth of human beings from the dead and discontinuity with the present world. He says Paul wishes to give “a sense of continuity and transformation rather than destruction and rebirth.”<sup>598</sup> In this sense, Paul wrote Rom. 8:19-23 having future hope for all creation in mind. Thus, by understanding Rom. 8:19-23 in the context of the sin story and the glory story, Byrne invites us to think about and live with careful conservation of the earth.

#### **5.4.2.2 Robert Jewett (2004 and 2006)<sup>599</sup>**

The impressive work of Robert Jewett, entitled ‘The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Reading Rom. 8:18-23 within the Imperial Context’, provides us with the idea that the fall and redemption of nature in Rom. 8: 19-23 should be interpreted via an interconnectivity analysis between Paul’s Gospel and Greco-Roman imperial ideology (especially as articulated by Virgil under the rule of Augustus).<sup>600</sup> He provides evidence through the Roman writer Virgil’s mention: “Here is Caesar and all of Iulius’s progeny, coming beneath the revolving heaven. This man, this is he, whom you often

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid. 200.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid. 202.

<sup>599</sup> Robert Jewett, “The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Reading Rom. 8:18-23 within the Imperial Context”, in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (New York: Trinity Press, 2004), 25-46; *Romans: A Commentary on the Book of Romans* (Hermeneia, MN: Fortress Press, 2006).

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. 25-46.

hear promised to you, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will establish once more ... the Golden Age in the fields once ruled by Saturn.”<sup>601</sup> This Greco-Roman propaganda provides the backdrop of the proclamation that Augustus and his successors are inaugurators of a new golden age, the “Age of Saturn,” in which paradisaical conditions on the earth will be restored. According to Jewett, Paul argues that it is not by the Roman imperium but by the power of the gospel that nature will be restored. Jewett thus spotlights two opposite points of ideology concerning nature. Jewett points out Virgil’s view that Caesar Augustus is a Messianic figure who brings the Golden Age which was once ruled by Saturn. The Golden Age in Virgil’s terms refers to political and social peace, an abundance of nature, and welfare of people - in short, *Pax Romana*.<sup>602</sup> Jewett mentions Greco-Roman documents several times in order to show the propaganda of Roman Imperial ideology, drawing attention to abundance of nature brought about by the Roman rulers in Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue (Ecl. 4.11.-41) and his Aeneid (6. 789-794).<sup>603</sup> Inscriptions in several monuments celebrate the returning of the Golden Age by Augustus.<sup>604</sup>

The contrasting points between Paul’s Gospel and Greco-Roman imperial ideology start from the origin of the corruption of nature. Roman propaganda finds its origin in “the ‘madness’ of non-Roman warfare and the corruption of barbaric impiety.”<sup>605</sup> On the other hand, according to Jewett, Rom. 8:19-23 clearly reflects that the current corruption of nature is primarily caused, not by the enemies of the Roman empire, but by Adam’s fall in Genesis 3, which is similar to Byrne’s argument. Thus,

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<sup>601</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>602</sup> Jewett, “The Corruption and Redemption of Creation”, 26-27.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid. 27-29.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. 31.

the barrenness which is depicted in Rom 8:20 occurs through human beings carrying out idolatrous desires to have unlimited glory and dominion (Rom. 1:21). Jewett thinks that God's curse is merely a response to Adam's sin.<sup>606</sup>

Another point of divergence between the Roman and Pauline visions is that the Roman imperial ideology propagates conquest in war as a means for building the Golden Age, whereas Paul's argument in Rom. 8:19-23 states that the abundance and liberation of creation is not brought about by the military action of Roman emperors, but by "the power of the gospel to convert the world"<sup>607</sup> and the emergence and empowerment of small groups of the children of God (τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ) who became the new creation through the Gospel (believers). Finally, Jewett concludes that changing the lifestyle of the children of God and believing God can bring the freedom and redemption of nature that God intends.<sup>608</sup> In other words, the altered lifestyle of the children of God (τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ) is the starting point "to restore the ecological system that had been thrown out of balance by wrongdoing (Rom 1:18-32 and sin (Rom 5-7))."<sup>609</sup> Jewett's interpretation yields ethical implications in terms of shaping humanity's eco-friendly action and behaviour.

#### **5.4.2.3 Harry H. Hahne (2006) <sup>610</sup>**

In contrast to Jewett, Hahne reads the eschatological text Rom. 8:19-23 in relation to the influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature. Hahne claims that "Paul's theology [in Rom. 8:19-23] is rooted in Jewish apocalyptic thought. Although the genre of this

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid. 39-46.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>610</sup> Harry A. Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation: Nature in Romans 8.19-22 and Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (LNTS: London and New York: T & T Clark, 2006).

passage is not an apocalypse, the worldview, theology and many expressions are very similar to those found in Jewish Apocalyptic works.”<sup>611</sup> He carefully researches the meaning of the corruption and redemption of creation in Jewish apocalyptic thought and its relationship to Paul’s ideas, especially in Rom. 8:19-23, through examining several Jewish apocalyptic texts such as 1 Enoch, The Book of Jubilees, 2 (Slavonic) Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 (Syriac) Baruch, Apocalypse of Moses and Life of Adam and Eve. Hahne finds that even though Rom. 8:19-23 belongs to the genre of letters, the theological standpoint of this text has similar points with Jewish apocalyptic theology.<sup>612</sup> Like Byrne and Jewett, Hahne considers intertextual links between Rom. 8:19-23 and Gen. 3 (Adam’s sin story), saying that the corruption of nature resulted from Adam’s fall.<sup>613</sup> Moreover, Hahne summarizes the five several views in terms of who subjected creation to futility. The first is the common view of God’s judicial judgement for the fall of Adam (Ge.3:17-18). The second is that Adam is the culprit who subjected creation after he fell. The third is that human beings are the cause of the corruption of nature. The fourth is Barth’s opinion that Christ caused the futility of creation through the judgment pronounced when he was crucified. The fifth is that the futility of creation resulted from Satan. Among these various points of view, Hahne concludes that God subjected the entirety of creation to futility as a part of judicial judgement of Adam’s fall, and that God also promised creation’s redemption in the future as another part of the judgement.<sup>614</sup> In this view, the whole of creation is a victim of human sin. Moreover, “The personification giving the non-rational creation a will suggests that the natural world primarily acts according to God’s design, except

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<sup>611</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid. 2-4.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid. 187-92.

where it has been damaged due to human sin.”<sup>615</sup> Hahne thinks this personification of nature is the common poetic device of both Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literatures.<sup>616</sup>

The important point of Hahne’s argument is that God is not only the punisher but also the giver of the promise of the future salvation of creation. In other words, God’s curse, which subjected the whole of creation to futility, is indeed only a response to Adam’s fall. And Adam’s fall affected the whole of creation because of the solidarity of the relationship between Adam and the rest of creation. In fact, the ultimate goal of God’s judgement is to redeem human beings and liberate creation from corruption and futility through Christ. This assumption explains why creation waits eagerly and confidently in hope of the eschatological glory of the children of God. The entirety of creation will share the glory of God’s children, because of its relationship of solidarity with human beings. Hahne’s argument has similar ethical implications to those found in Byrne and Jewett.

#### **5.4.2.4 Jonathan Moo (2008) <sup>617</sup>**

In his article ‘Romans 8.19-22 and Isaiah’s Cosmic Covenant’, Jonathan Moo discovers thematic and verbal similarities between Rom. 8:18-20 and Isaiah 24-27 which can provide a strong argument that Isaiah 24-27 (particularly Isa. 25:8)<sup>618</sup> is the primary source of Paul’s argument in terms of the groaning and the corruption of creation in Rom. 8:19-22. He says, “it is the Hebrew prophetic tradition that informs

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<sup>615</sup> Ibid. 189.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid. 182.

<sup>617</sup> Jonathan Moo, “Romans 8.19-22 and Isaiah’s Cosmic Covenant,” *New Testament Studies* 54, no. 1 (2008): 74-89.

<sup>618</sup> Isa. 25:8, ‘He will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth’ (NRSV).

Paul's thinking on this point; but it may be Isaiah 24-27 in particular that can illuminate the significance of the links Paul makes between the groaning of creation, the suffering and patient endurance of God's people, and the resurrection hope."<sup>619</sup> In this way, Moo argues that Paul considers creation to be enslaved to corruption because of "the effects of ongoing human sin and divine judgment" as in Rom. 8 (subjection to futility of creation).<sup>620</sup> Based on this argument, Moo sheds light on the meanings of several theological themes in Rom. 8:19-23 such as creation, the bondage to decay, and the liberation of creation in relation to the Greek Old Testament.

In terms of the meaning of creation (κτίσις), it designates only the non-human creation, because the wording of Rom. 8:19 contrasts with the wording of Rom. 8:21 which implies that there is a distinction between human beings and creation (κτίσις) in the two passages and because the transition from verses 22 to 23 excludes believers from the scope of creation (κτίσις) in verses 19-22. Moreover, Paul's declaration in Rom. 8:20 (for the creation (κτίσις) was subjected to futility, not by its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it) also excludes human beings in general.<sup>621</sup> Like Byrne, Jewett, and Hahne, Moo has a similar point that the allusion of the corruption of all creation in Rom. 8:19-23 is Adam's sin story in Gen. 3. Concerning the meaning of "bondage to decay (τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς)," Moo considers that it means the inevitable death and physical corruption of creation.<sup>622</sup> Thus, Moo argues that not only Adam's fall (human's sin) has affected the state of creation itself, but that its influence will be maintained until the end of this age. However, according to Moo, Paul claims that as creation is subjected to futility and suffering by the consequences of Adam's

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<sup>619</sup> Moo, "Romans 8:19-22 and Isaiah's Cosmic Covenant," 84.

<sup>620</sup> Moo, "Romans 8. 19-22 and Isaiah's Cosmic Covenant," 74.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid. 74-75.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid. 81-82.



fall (the human sin), creation will also receive the fruits of human's glory. Creation will participate in the freedom and redemption of human beings which resulted from Christ.<sup>623</sup>

Another interesting point is that Moo says that there are two kinds of ethical lifestyle patterns operating in Rom. 8:19-22 – these are a positive-eco-friendly lifestyle in Christ and a negative-ecological-degrading life style in Adam (sinful humanity). The positive-eco-ethical lifestyle which is enabled for the new human being in Christ inverts the effects of the curse from Adam's fall through defeat of death. On the other hand, in a case of a negative-ecological-degrading lifestyle in Adam, humans' sinful behaviour accelerates "the creation's experience of futility."<sup>624</sup> Thus, Moo may encourage people to live in an environmental-friendly way in Christ which is provided in Rom. 8:19-23 so that creation can obtain "its longed-for hope for freedom."<sup>625</sup>

#### **5.4.2.5 David Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate (2008 and 2010)<sup>626</sup>**

*Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis*, which emerged from an interdisciplinary research project at the University of Exeter on 'Uses of the Bible and Environmental Ethics,' combining biblical, theological, and scientific expertise, proposes ecological, ethical, hermeneutical, narrative readings of Pauline literature - in particular Rom 8:19-23 and Col. 1:15-20 - in response to the current

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<sup>623</sup> Ibid. 88-89.

<sup>624</sup> Cherryl Hunt, David Horrell, Christophe Southgate, "An Environmental Mantra? Ecological Interest in Romans in Romans 8:19-23 and a Modest Proposal for its Interpretation", *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS. Vol. 59, pt. 2 (2008), 547-49; Moo, "Romans 8. 19-22 and Isaiah's Cosmic Covenant", 82-83.

<sup>625</sup> Moo, "Romans 8. 19-22 and Isaiah's Cosmic Covenant", 89.

<sup>626</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*.

ecological crisis. Horrell, Hunt and Southgate apply a “‘revisionist’ approach”<sup>627</sup> which draws on the readings of recovery and resistance with critical engagement with biblical texts.<sup>628</sup> Moreover, they embrace Conradie’s hermeneutical approach, operating with a hermeneutical device – the so-called “doctrinal key.” Horrell, Hunt and Southgate prefer to call it a hermeneutical lens that shapes readings of the biblical texts and brings different features into focus.<sup>629</sup> In addition, they combine a narrative approach which not only concentrates on the importance of narratives in the biblical text for formulating community, conduct, character, and identity, but also “enables us to explore Pauline texts fruitfully and allows those texts [Rom. 8:19-23 and Col. 1:15-20] to contribute constructively to the formulation of a Pauline ecotheology.”<sup>630</sup> Horrell, Hunt and Southgate reveal a cosmological narrative of the unfolding of the creation (κτίσις) from the distant past through the present, and into the future which entails not only a transformation of creation (κτίσις) but also shapes the outline of the trajectory of the cosmological narrative in Rom. 8:19-23 and Col. 1:15-20.<sup>631</sup>

In terms of the meaning of creation (κτίσις), they think that Paul was primarily concerned with nonhuman living creatures, rather than with the inanimate features of creation.<sup>632</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate see the “bondage to decay of creation (κτίσις)” as referring not only to a past time in the creation narrative, but also as “a broader allusion to the unfolding story of Genesis 1-11, in which corruption affects all flesh.”<sup>633</sup> The interesting point is that Horrell and his colleagues, do not, in fact, think that Adam’s fall in Gen. 3 is the intertextual link with Rom. 8:19-23, particularly given

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<sup>627</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid. 39-40.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid. 43-49.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid. 4, 33-47.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid. 71-72.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid. 75.

the meaning of the word ματαιότης in verse 20. Horrell, Hunt and Southgate perceive there to be a linguistic background with the word ματαιότης as found in the wisdom tradition such as Psalms, Proverbs 22:8, and Ecclesiastes 3:19.<sup>634</sup> To be more specific, alternatively to Byrne, Jewett, and Hahne's position, they reject the idea that the fall of creation results from human sin and destroys an original paradisaal state, as follows:

A fall of creation caused by human sin cannot do justice to the vast eras of evolutionary time before anything like a human moral agent existed, and in which there is good evidence that creaturely suffering and extinction were intrinsic to the natural order. There is no scientific evidence that a time ever existed when life on Earth was characterized by peaceful relations between creatures, when, or instance, there was no animal predation or death.<sup>635</sup>

In this view, the futility of creation (κρίσις) in verse 20 is an illustration of the existential anxiety and weakness of creation (κρίσις) which occurred in the evolutionary process through "the constant cycle of toil, suffering, and death."<sup>636</sup>

In the present time, Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate argue that the groaning of creation seems to be a continuing characteristic of the existence of creation in reaching "a critical moment of eschatological expectation."<sup>637</sup> Paul invites humanity, especially his audience and the Spirit, to join in the present groaning with creation.<sup>638</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate consider God to be the principal agent of the futility of creation and its inability to achieve its true goal or to free itself from the system of

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<sup>634</sup> Ibid. 77.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid. 133.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid. 77.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid. 72.

suffering, decay, and death. In other words, creation's futility is in God's control, in hope within the so-called "divine economy."<sup>639</sup> Horrell, Hunt and Southgate consider the children of God (τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ) to denote "the Christian believers."<sup>640</sup> Thus, Paul, according to Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, states that creation "here is eagerly awaiting the revelation of the Christian believers"<sup>641</sup> who are also awaiting the redemption of their bodies and creation's liberation through their changed lifestyle by Christ.

Regarding the ethical engagement of Rom. 8:19-23 with the environment, Horrell, Hunt and Southgate proffer "other-regard" and "corporate solidarity" as key moral norms. They also suggest that these need slightly more specific definitions in order to relate to environmental ethics - especially 'corporate solidarity' - as these are clearly grounded in "Christ's kenotic self-giving"<sup>642</sup> lifestyle. In this case, 'other' can be taken to imply a broader scope beyond the human community. It includes other species of the earth. Thus, Paul, according to Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, invites us, Christian believers, to act with solidarity and other-regard towards the environment and non-human creatures through what they term a kenosis of acquisitiveness, aspiration and appetite.<sup>643</sup> Thereby, all human beings can participate in God's reconciliation of the earth, for the new life in Christ entails ethical imperatives.

The theological, exegetical, and ethical engagement with Rom. 8:19-23 by Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate contributes to constructive ecologically informed

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<sup>639</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>640</sup> In Rom. 8:14 Paul already used the word υἱοὶ to refer to his audience. See, Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 82.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid. 80.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid. 197.

<sup>643</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate consider a vegetarian lifestyle to be one possible way of Christian living, and of following the eco-kenotic ethic modelled by Christ. See, Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 198.

readings of Paul's letters. More importantly, they research the exegetical-ethical interpretation of Rom. 8:19-23 via interdisciplinary study including theology and science which are rarely made coherent with each other in Christianity.

### **5.5. An Ecological Reading of Rom. 8:19-23**

These various attempts to offer an ecological reading of Rom. 8:19-23 help to indicate the fruitfulness of this text for a biblical ecotheology. In the following sections I will show how this approach might be further developed, and how it contrasts with contemporary Korean interpretation. Although this entire chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans mainly addresses justification, grace, and law, it is undeniable that Paul also deals with the status quo and the ultimate destiny of the whole of creation. In light of the contemporary realities of an environmentally threatened world, and in light of Paul's concern in relation to creation's liberation in Rom. 8:19-23, this text will be key for discussion concerning the relationship between God, humans, and the rest of creation. Indeed, this passage presents various theological issues for exegetical work, and I shall concentrate on several points: 1. The relationship between humans, creation, and God. 2. A sphere of influence of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ towards all creation, and 3. God's ultimate plan for all creation, particularly nonhuman creation. Moreover, I would like to utilise in my interpretation of Rom. 8:19-23 my chosen methodology of applying Conradie's argument that doctrinal constructs shape the interpretive process, and explain the connection between my interpretation and the five doctrinal constructs. These considerations encourage the interpreter to participate in the immediate context in such a way in which it supports us in shaping ecologically well-informed answers to our exegesis.

### 5.5.1 The Structure of Rom. 8:19-23

Biblical scholars have different structural views of Rom. 8:19-23.<sup>644</sup> One influential model is Hahne's suggestion of a moving back and forth structurally between the two themes of glory and suffering. Hahne argues that Rom 8: 18-30 mainly focuses not only on enduring the present hardships of creation but also on a hopeful expectation of the glorious future of creation. This is Hahne's structural model.<sup>645</sup>

Verse	Theme	Summary
v. 19	Glory	Creation looks forward expectantly to the revelation of the sons of God.
v. 20a-b	Suffering	Creation is subjected to futility.
vv. 20c-21	Glory	Creation hopes to be set free and brought into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
v. 22	Suffering	Creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth.
v. 22	Glory	There is implicit hope for future glory, since the agony of childbirth is a productive pain with a positive result.

Hahne claims that verses 19-22 have intertwined structurally in terms of future hope for glory and the present suffering of creation. He argues that "Paul moves back and forth between the two themes [suffering and glory] easily because his goal is to give assurance of future glory to believers who are in the midst of suffering."<sup>646</sup>

One weakness of this structural model is that even though this model shows the close interaction between two ideas such as suffering and future hope of creation

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<sup>644</sup> Olle Christoffersson, *The Earnest Expectation of the Creature: The Flood Tradition as Matrix of Romans 8:18-27* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990), 28-33 and 141. Christoffersson introduces various structural analysis of Rom 8: 18-30. Theodor Zahn's structural analysis is particularly influential, and many later biblical scholars have followed it. See Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Leipzig: Deichert, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 1925), 515; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949), 329-30; Christiaan J. Beker, "Vision of Hope for a Suffering World: Romans 8:17-30", *Princeton Theological Seminary Journal* 3 (1994): 26-32; John Bolt, "The Relation Between Creation and Redemption in Romans 8:18-27", *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (April 1995), 34-51.

<sup>645</sup> Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation*, 175. Hahne built his approach by integrating Zahn and Christoffersson's structural model, see, 173-75.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid.

in Rom. 8:19-23, it seems unable to clarify the sequential distinctions of eschatological visions in a narrative trajectory from past, present to future. One way to avoid this drawback is to use a narrative analysis. Indeed, it is right that the story direction of the creation discourse in Rom. 8:19-23 sometimes is difficult and uncertain, because Paul's presentation is closely related to the "past-present and present-future."<sup>647</sup> In fact, there is no straight line of creation discourse in Rom. 8:19-23 in which the past, present, and future's time order can be distinguished without difficulty. However, as Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate suggest, Rom. 8:19-23 has the implicit eschatological narrative which can be distinguished from the chronological past (creation was subjected to futility), present (creation is waiting), and future (creation will be set free) time trajectory in God's redemptive purposes to help eco-theological-ethical readings of the text.<sup>648</sup> This narrative analysis can draw the contours of the narrative plot from its beginning and middle to the end, which involves a transformation of creation.<sup>649</sup>

The following structural pattern, based on the analysis of Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, considers the chronological order of past, present, and future of creation in Rom. 8:19-23:

#### Past of Creation (with continuing current reality)

- The usage of creation in Rom. 8:19-23 itself connotes certain past events relating to all creation or to individual creatures.
- The state of creation has not only been in bondage to decay, but it has also been subjected to futility from past to present, not by its will, but by the subjector (v. 21). This current circumstance of creation's reality emphasizes the negative influence of some events from the past on the present which finally

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<sup>647</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 71.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid. 243. For a more detailed explanation, see Chapter 3: A Narrative Ecotheology?, 50-59

<sup>649</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 71.

are converted with the resolution of the story.

#### Present of Creation (ongoing from the past)

- Now the entirety of creation, which is personified, is continually groaning and travailing together (v. 22).
- In this, it overlaps and integrates into the hardship and groaning of Paul and his congregation who have the first fruits of the Spirit (v. 23).

#### Future of Creation

- The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (v. 19).
- Those audiences to whom the Spirit is given as the first fruits wait for adoption as God's children in the redemption of their bodies (v. 23).
- Creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (v. 21). Finally, "this plot looks forward to a final transformation which resolves and surpasses the negative state of decay and futility."<sup>650</sup>

### 5.5.2 The Meaning of Creation (κτίσις)

One of the important interpretive tasks in Rom. 8:19-23 is to define what κτίσις means. According to Edward Adams, who carefully studied Paul's cosmological language of κτίσις and κόσμος, κτίσις does not originally include a theological reference. Instead, in the linguistic and historical background of κτίσις in non-biblical Greek usage, it had "the standard sense of 'founding', 'foundation', 'settlement'. In Greek literature, it is employed in contexts relating to the establishment of cities."<sup>651</sup> The naissance of theological meaning of κτίσις began from the Septuagint which refers to a thing or work which is created by God. Moreover, outside of LXX, κτίσις is defined as "the

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<sup>650</sup> Ibid. 72.

<sup>651</sup> Adams, *Constructing the World*, 80.



senses, ‘creature’ (*T. Naph.*2:30); ‘creation’ (*Ep. Arist.* 136; 139); ‘act of creation’ (*T. Reub.* 2:3, 9, with reference to the creation of humanity...)”.<sup>652</sup> κτίσις occurs seven times at 1:20, 25; 8:19, 20, 21, 22, 39 in Paul’s letter to Romans. This shows us that the usage of κτίσις in Paul’s letters proliferates in two main passages - 1:18-32 and 8:19-39 - which chiefly include the creation motif.

There are various ways to define and translate the word κτίσις in Rom. 8:19-23. According to Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, Irenaeus (AD 130-202; *Haer.* 5:32), Tertullian (AD 155-240; *Herm.* II) and John Chrysostom (AD 349-407; *Hom. Rom.*, 14) interpreted κτίσις as referring to the entire created order. On the other hand, Tertullian’s contemporary Origen (AD 184-253) assumed that κτίσις in Rom. 8:19-23 might refer to celestial bodies and angelic forces (*Princ.* 3.5.4. 116-22; *Comm. Rom.* 7.4). However, Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430), a contemporary of John Chrysostom, takes it to refer to the body, spirit, and soul of human beings (*Exp. Prop. Ex Ep. Ad Rom.* 53; *Div quest.* 83.67; *Fid. Et symb.* 10.23). Ambrose (A.D 340-397) takes Origen and Augustine’s view: the word refers to celestial bodies and humans, with the possibility of also including all creatures (*Ep.* 34.4-9).<sup>653</sup> Martin Luther (A.D 1483-1546) interpreted the word κτίσις as referring to created things.<sup>654</sup> By extension, John Calvin (A.D 1509 – 1564) thought that the meaning of κτίσις in Rom. 8:19-23 is all creatures, including inanimate creatures such as trees and stones.<sup>655</sup> John Wesley (1703 – 1791) followed Luther’s definition of κτίσις as referring to all creatures.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>653</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, “An Environmental Mantra?”, 547-49.

<sup>654</sup> *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, edited and translated by Wilhelm Pauck (Library of Christian Classics, 15; London: SCM, 1961), 237-39.

<sup>655</sup> *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. I (Books I.i to 3.xix), ed. John T. Mcneil and translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Library of Christian Classics, 20; London: SCM, 1960), 717.

<sup>656</sup> Sermon 60 in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, Vol. 6 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition., London: John Mason, 1829), 245.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, theologians have also had different views on κτίσις. For example, Karl Barth interprets κτίσις as ‘all creatures’.<sup>657</sup> Ernst Käsemann understood κτίσις as including both non-human creation and non-Christians.<sup>658</sup> There are contemporary theologians who focus on anthropocentric views of κτίσις. According to Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, C. K. Barrett, John Gager, G. W. H. Lampe, and C. H. Dodd argue that it refers to non-humans, and the usage of κτίσις in Rom. 8:19-23 thus emphasizes Christians’ future redemption and the nonbelieving human world, and shows the human centered drama in Rom. 8:19-23.<sup>659</sup> However, Jürgen Moltmann takes κτίσις to refer to a more comprehensive definition saying, “And here ‘nature[κτίσις]’ means both the natural world in which we share, and our own bodily nature. As a network and interplay of relationship is built up, a symbiotic life comes into being.”<sup>660</sup> He even links κτίσις here with Cosmic Christology as follows. “The vision of cosmic redemption through Christ is therefore not a speculation. It emerges logically from the christology and the anthropology. Without these wider horizons, the God of Jesus Christ would not be the creator of the world, and redemption would become a Gnostic myth hostile to the body and the world.”<sup>661</sup>

The recent trend of contemporary theologians in relation to κτίσις continues to produce various views. For instance, Susan Eastman mentions κτίσις as referring to both nonhuman creation and disobedient humanity.<sup>662</sup> She pointed out the necessity

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<sup>657</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 4: *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* Vol. 2, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 329.

<sup>658</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 232-33.

<sup>659</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, “An Environmental Mantra?”, 549-50.

<sup>660</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 3.

<sup>661</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 141-42.

<sup>662</sup> Susan Eastman, “Whose Apocalypse? The Identity of the Sons of God in Romans 8:19”, *Journal of*

of both meanings as definitions of κτίσις for a proper interpretation of Rom 8:19-23. This is because personifications of nature such as groaning and laboring in Rom. 8:19-23 also appear in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in Psalms and Prophets, in the inseparable character of creation and humanity. Eastman mentioned Isa 24:4-7 and Jeremiah 12:4 as follows:

[The fact that] the mourning and rejoicing of 'nature' are intimately intertwined with the fortunes of Israel weakens the argument for interpreting κτίσις as creation apart from humanity. To separate the voice of 'nonhuman creation' from the human voices of these texts is to misread them. This implies that to exclude a human voice from the groaning of 'creation' in Rom 8:22 is as erroneous as to exclude the natural world. Rather, Paul assumes the unity of 'the whole creation,' which groans and suffers pangs of childbirth together – that is, as one. The unity of the suffering points to the unity of redemption.<sup>663</sup>

On the other hand, Adams follows “the consensus view that κτίσις in 8:19-22 denotes the ‘non-human creation.’”<sup>664</sup> Another trend of current theologians concerning κτίσις, is to focus on the theme of liberation in κτίσις and try and produce detailed exegetical work on this in Rom 8:19-23. Hahne notes that Romans contains “the largest concentration of κτίσις in Paul’s letters”.<sup>665</sup>

We need to keep in mind Adams’ argument in vv. 19-20, “Yet the context makes clear that the κτίσις is not inherently ambiguous. It is not the κτίσις which seduces and tempts human beings away from God. If human beings stand in an ambiguous relation to creation, it is due to their misperception and misappropriation of it, to their distortion of its true character. Paul is not casting aspersions on κτίσις but on those who misuse

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*Biblical Literature* 121, no. 2 (2002): 275.

<sup>663</sup> Eastman, “Whose Apocalypse? The Identity of the Sons of God in Romans 8:19”, 274.

<sup>664</sup> Adams, *Constructing the World*, 177.

<sup>665</sup> Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation*, 2.

it.”<sup>666</sup> In Rom 8:19-23, κτίσις itself implies a creative act that is in tune with God. Moreover, κτίσις cooperates in harmony with God’s purposes and desires in v. 19 through expectantly awaiting the completion of God’s desire. Furthermore, κτίσις acts in line with the Spirit by groaning (vv22, 26). In addition to when we think about Paul’s mentioning in Rom 5:10 of the defiant features of humans as enemies of God (against God’s will), κτίσις in Rom. 8:19-23 can here be defined and translated as something about the entirety of nonhuman creation.

Concerning my five doctrinal constructs, this theme, κτίσις, is closely related to the second doctrinal construct concerning the covenant with the entire creation, expressed in particular in the Incarnation of Christ. This doctrinal construct considers God’s covenant through Jesus Christ to cover not only human beings but also the rest of creation. In other words, one of the eschatological visions of the New Testament is to reconcile and liberate creation from bondage to decay. Thus, in spite of the many available options that I can choose as a definition of κτίσις, and when I focus on the second doctrinal construct and the outcome of my exegetical study, I conclude that Paul intentionally used this word, κτίσις, in Rom. 8:19-23 to refer to non-human creation.

### **5.5.3 Rom. 8: 20-21 A: Subjection to Futility and the Bondage to Decay of Creation**

Rom. 8:19-23 addresses the eschatological picture in which all creation is suffering in the present situation and yearning for redemption through Jesus Christ in the future.<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Adams, *Constructing the World*, 158.

<sup>667</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 506.

In particular, Rom. 8:20 illustrates creation's subjection to futility (τῇ ματαιότητι). The meaning of the Greek word, ματαιότης, is difficult to interpret. ματαιότης has several lexical meanings including "emptiness, futility, purposelessness, and transitoriness."<sup>668</sup> Hahne provides several possibilities of interpretation as follows: "corruption in general," "evil spiritual powers," "spiritual emptiness," and "idolatry and false gods."<sup>669</sup> Moreover, Cranfield offers an interpretation of ματαιότης regarding creation by indicating that "the sub-human creation has been subjected to the frustration of not being able properly to fulfil the purpose of its existence, God having appointed that without man it should not be made perfect."<sup>670</sup> Furthermore, Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate point out the continuous inability of creation to achieve "its purpose, or to emerge from content cycle of toil, suffering, and death."<sup>671</sup> Based on several biblical scholars' stance, the comprehensive meaning of ματαιότης is to indicate a certain state of creation that means cannot it reach God's original purpose for it.

The Greek word, φθορᾶ, can be interpreted in several ways, such as "breakdown of organic matter," "inward depravity," "total destruction of an entity," and "decay."<sup>672</sup> As Hahne notes, the general usage of φθορᾶ in Pauline literature is for physical death and decay rather than moral corruption.<sup>673</sup> Also, Paul uses φθορᾶ and its cognates in 1 Cor. 15: 42 to refer to destruction and decay of the physical body and in Rom. 1:23 as representing the destructible and mortal human being.<sup>674</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>668</sup> Frederick William Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 621.

<sup>669</sup> Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation*, 190-92.

<sup>670</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 413-14.

<sup>671</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 77.

<sup>672</sup> Danker, Bauer, and Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1054-55.

<sup>673</sup> Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation*, 195. The noun form of φθορᾶς was never used in Paul's letters.

<sup>674</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 74. However, φθορᾶς sometimes is used to indicate certain moral connotations which are linked with degradation and physical implications. See Fitzmyer,

Cranfield considers φθορᾶ to mean “moral corruption resulting from idolatry” and that “the bondage of decay” indicates “creation’s bondage to man’s corrupt abuse of it.”<sup>675</sup> This would suggest that Paul alludes to creation’s ongoing threat of being destroyed by Adam’s sin (v. 19) and the action of his descendants, humanity. Paul states in Rom. 8: 20 that “the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope (τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἣ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἑκοῦσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι).” Here, ἀλλὰ is translated “but”, and is applied in relation to οὐχ which represents the negative meaning, “not”. This usage of words reinforces the oppositional meaning of the sentence. This combination of conjunction and negative is used in this sentence to emphasize the fact that the creation’s subjection in futility is not by its will (οὐχ ἑκοῦσα) but by “the will of the one who subjected the creation (ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα).” However, this raises the problem of ‘who’ is the one who does the subjecting in creation, because Paul employs the verb ὑποτάσσω in different passive forms. One form is ὑπετάγη, which is a finite verb. The other is ὑποτάξαντα which is a participle. Paul omitted the explanation as to how creation has fallen into its futility condition. Hahne makes various suggestions<sup>676</sup> as to who subjected the creation to futility, including God,<sup>677</sup> Adam,<sup>678</sup> humanity in general,<sup>679</sup> Christ,<sup>680</sup> and Satan.<sup>681</sup> Considering the prepositional phrase at the end of

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*Romans*, 509.

<sup>675</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 413. Also see, C. F. D. Moule, *Man and Nature in the New Testament: Some Reflections of Biblical Ecology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 11-14; Jewett, *Romans*, 513.

<sup>676</sup> Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation*, 187.

<sup>677</sup> C.B.E. Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary: On the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 413; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICIT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 303; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 235.

<sup>678</sup> G.W.H. Lampe, “The New Testament Doctrine of Ktisis,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (1964), 449-62.

<sup>679</sup> Ethelbert Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 74.

<sup>680</sup> Karl Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959), 99-100.

verse 20, ἐφ' ἐλπίδι, which can be translated as "in hope" (NRSV), it can be assumed that the one who subjected creation to futility had done it based on a certain hope. Among Hahne's suggestions, Adam, who led the rest of creation into death through his own sin, and Satan, who brings darkness to the world, cannot be 'the one who subjected creation in hope.' Since the crucifixion of Christ brings not death and futility, but life to creation, then Christ is not the answer either. Thus, the most likely answer is that it is God who is the prime agent who ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ' ἐλπίδι (subjects creation to futility in hope). God, as the ruler of all creation, is the one who subjects all creation to futility for a limited period, and he does so in hope. Some scholars assume that human beings are also the main agent of creation's subjection to futility, based on Paul's statement in Rom. 5:12-21 which illustrates that Adam's fall enables sin and death to enter this world. They speculate that it is a reference to Gen. 3: 17-19 when Paul implies Adam and Eve's primeval disobedience towards God is stated in verse 19 as the cause of all creation's death.<sup>682</sup> Luther and Calvin also consider it to be an allusion to Adam's sinful story in Genesis 3, and this is a widely accepted opinion among biblical scholars.<sup>683</sup>

However, as Horrell, Hunt and Southgate have mentioned, it is unclear whether or not Paul refers here to the LXX account of the Adamic fall in Gen. 2:17 and 3:19. This is because God's curse in Gen. 3 is directed only to the "ground (Heb: אֲדָמָה;

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<sup>681</sup> Karl Heim, *The World: Its Creation and Consummation*, trans. Robert Smith (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 125.

<sup>682</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (London and New York: The Anchor Bible 33, 1993), 509; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 470-72; Byrne, *Romans*, 260; Hahne, *Corruption and Redemption*, 195.

<sup>683</sup> Wilhelm Pauck, *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, ed. John Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen (London: SCM Press, 1961), 238; John T. McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 1 (London: SCM Press, 1960), 246

LXX: γῆ [Gen. 3:17]),”<sup>684</sup> which implies that the degree of the curse affects not all creation but only the part of nature that is *ground* or *soil*. In other words, this curse does not represent all living creatures.

What I am suggesting here is not a denial of the effect of Adam’s action. Rather, the main point is a broader allusion to the unfolding story in Genesis 1-5 in a smaller way and in a larger way Genesis 1-11, in which corruption affects all flesh ( לֹא־בָשָׂר / πᾶσα σὰρξ, and note the repeated use of καταφθείρω in Gen 6:12),<sup>685</sup> not by divine agency, but by humans - wherein humans are the primary agents to have caused the bondage of decay.

#### **5.5.4 Rom. 21B-23: Groaning (birth pangs), the Children of God, and the Liberation of Creation**

In the latter part of v. 21, the theme of the liberation of creation (ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς) is deliberately represented. Although Paul does not elaborately explain what creation’s bondage to decay and enslavement means, it is clear that Paul describes the groaning, suffering, yearning, and liberating of all creation from the bondage to decay and corruption. All creation waits for the revealing of the children of God (8:19) so that they can be free from the bondage to decay. There are some different arguments about what is meant by “the children of God” (τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ: verse 21). Olle Christofferson considers the background of this word to be a division from the flood tradition, Gen. 6-8 and Enoch 6-11. In particular, he points out that ‘the sons of God’ as referred to here has a parallel with ‘the sons of

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<sup>684</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 75.

<sup>685</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 75.



God' in Gen. 6:2 - the angelic beings who are to be revealed at the Parousia.<sup>686</sup> However, the more convincing answer would be "Christian believers". Paul applies the term 'the children of God' several times in Rom. 8:14 and 17 to refer to Christian believers, especially the readers of Romans. Moreover, the critical criteria of 'the children of God' must include possession of the Spirit of God and leading by the Spirit of God (v. 14).<sup>687</sup> As a result, we can say that creation eagerly awaits the revealing of the Christian believers.

Surprisingly, the male Paul, who never can experience birth pains like a pregnant woman (Rom. 8:22), describes the suffering of creation by using the imagery of a female woman in labor. There are various interpretations of what the groaning of creation means. Some biblical scholars understand it to be a reference to "messianic woes", which is an expected tribulation and upheaval of humans as well as of nature that will occur upon reaching the Parousia of Christ in the end time scenario.<sup>688</sup> Some Jewish writings such as Isa. 13:6-8; 21:3, Hos. 13:13, Mic. 4:10, 1 En. 88.2-8, and QH 11.29-36 seem to indicate a strong catastrophic disaster or upheaval of humans and the rest of creation that will occur before the Parousia of Christ. However, the usage of groaning or labor pain in Paul's letters has no such meanings or applications. I think that Paul does not only imply that the creation's groaning itself is only a feature of the climax of the end-time story. Rather, as Horrell, Hunt and Southgate note, Paul is indicating the continuing groaning of creation in the present era. In other words, the groaning of creation "seems to be depicted as an ongoing and contemporary feature

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<sup>686</sup> Olle Christofferson, *The Earnest Expectation of the Creature: Flood Tradition as Matrix of Romans 8: 18-27* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1990), 103-4 and 120-25.

<sup>687</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 472; Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation*, 196; Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 79-80; Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 415-16.

<sup>688</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 472-73; Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 414-416.

of its existence.”<sup>689</sup>

Thus, even though the creation’s groaning seems to indicate the climactic moment of the end-time scenario, it also implies a continuing figure of creation’s existence.

As a matter of fact, there are several different examples that express labor pain in the New Testament. Conrad Gempf categorizes four types of labor pain in the New Testament: ‘intense and total pain,’ ‘helpless pain,’ ‘productive pain,’ and ‘pain that must run its course’, and he concludes that Paul prefers to use it for indicating ‘hopeful and productive pain’ in these verses.<sup>690</sup> But, this hopeful pain cannot hide the intensity and reality of the strength of the suffering of creation in Rom. 8: 18-23. Indeed, there are two loud, uncontrollable, and painful voices in these verses. The first one is the groaning of non-human creation (8:22). The second one is the voice of human beings (8:15). If we see these verses with the immediate antecedent verses 8:15-17, the painful sound expands. The first painful voice appears from the Christian believers (8:15), the second one is ‘groaning in labor pain of creation’ (8:22), which is then linked back to the Christian believers (8:22). These voices are joined together by the Holy Spirit (8:26). The scale of the groaning voice is extended in the Spirit: “unexpressable groans (στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις).” Thus, we can see the three painful voices of humans, non-humans, and the divine, and the extent of groaning is expanded.<sup>691</sup> As Dunn states, that voice of creation is a familiar usage in Jewish apocalyptic tradition.<sup>692</sup> Some Old Testament texts and Jewish literatures also mention

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<sup>689</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 78.

<sup>690</sup> Conrad Gempf, “The Imagery of Birthpangs in the New Testament”, *The Tyndale Bulletin* 45, no. 1 (1994): 119-35.

<sup>691</sup> Tonstad, *Romans*, 239.

<sup>692</sup> **Dunn**, *Romans 1-18*, 410 and 470-73.

the mourning of the earth as shown above.<sup>693</sup>

It may be construed then that humans, the rest of creation, and the Spirit all share co-groaning to some extent. This passage “indicates that somehow, they are caught up in the same process, yearning for the same outcome, which the future dimensions of the story will go on to depict.”<sup>694</sup>

This co-groaning contains two kinds of reality: suffering and hope, as woman’s pregnancy and childbirth is accompanied by both. The waiting of creation (Rom. 8. 19) is the expression of confident future hope. However, the hope does not run in a straight line to God. The vital point is that creation longs for the revelation of τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ (children of God). The children of God are the people who are led by the Spirit of God (8:14). In other words, Paul uses τέκνον interchangeably with the word “υἱός” in vv. 14-17 in order to refer to Christian believers.<sup>695</sup> Christian believers are τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ (children of God) who are going to be glorified with Christ (v. 17). Creation yearns for the revealing of the children of God, because by that time creation will obtain the freedom from its bondage to decay (v. 21).

This promise of the liberty of creation and human beings can be understood to imply an important task for Christian believers. Southgate states that a reading of these passages would suggest that “the working out of the freedom of the children of God will be to do with humans having some part in the healing of the evolutionary process...”<sup>696</sup> Moreover, Byrne suggests the possibility of humanity’s function as a

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<sup>693</sup> For the full explanation, see Katherine M. Hayes, *“The Earth Mourns”: Prophetic Metaphor and Oral Aesthetic*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002).

<sup>694</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 79.

<sup>695</sup> Hahne, *The Corruption and Redemption of Creation*, 195.

<sup>696</sup> Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation*, 96.

partner of the earth who reveals God's grace working through Christ:<sup>697</sup>

Human action impinges upon the world for good (as a response to grace) and for ill (as a manifestation of captivity to sin), we can acknowledge that, in Pauline terms, the future of the world (salvation) does to some extent lie in human hands. It is not simply God's gift and it remains ours to lose. Hope for the future in this sense takes human action into account. It remains hope in God but it is also hope in the prevailing power of God's grace working through, not around or above human cooperation. If righteousness for Paul is ultimately about fidelity – divine and human – then Paul's exhortation to believers that they offer 'their members as instruments of righteousness to God' (Rom. 6.13) can be taken as, in part at least, an encouragement to behave not only responsibly towards the environment but with an unselfish, non-exploitative fidelity that mirrors and indeed is an extension of the divine fidelity (righteousness) behind the entire Christ-event (cf. 2 Cor. 5.21).<sup>698</sup>

Jewett also argues that humans, particularly the children of God, play a pivotal role in the recovery of the whole of creation. As we have already seen, he interprets Rom. 8 against the background of Roman Imperial Ideology. Jewett claims that it is not through peace and prosperity by the propaganda of Augustus Caesar but by the suffering and groaning of the "children of God" in reality that the recovery of the whole of creation will be fully achieved. To be more specific, the children of God, who are redeemed by the gospel, not only turn from wrongdoing (Rom. 1:18-32) and sin (Rom. 5-7) but they also restore the ecological system through their changed lifestyle and revised ethics.<sup>699</sup> This is Jewett's position:

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<sup>697</sup> Byrne, "Creation Groaning", 198.

<sup>698</sup> Byrne, "An Ecological Reading of Rom. 8. 19-22: Possibilities and Hesitations", 93.

<sup>699</sup> Jewett, "The Corruption and Redemption of Creation," 35.

Paul implies that the entire creation waits with baited breath for the emergence and empowerment of those who will take responsibility for its restoration... As the children of God are redeemed by the gospel, they begin to regain a rightful dominion over the created world (Gen. 1.28-30; Ps. 8.5-8); in more modern terms, their altered lifestyle and revised ethics begin to restore the ecological system that had been thrown out of balance by wrongdoing (1. 18-32) and sin (Rom. 5-7). In contrast to the civic cult, Paul does not have a magical transformation of nature in view<sup>700</sup>

Despite the fact that Southgate, Byrne, and Jewett's opinions reflect somewhat human-centered interpretations of Paul's letter, they offer important implications that the children of God (Christian believers) bear responsibilities for the conservation of the whole of creation.<sup>701</sup> Humanity has a pivotal role in God's redemptive work of creation. This theological theme is deeply related to the third doctrinal construct: *Humanity as Part of the Community of Creation*. This doctrinal construct concerns humanity's responsibility towards nature and the interdependent relationship between humans and the rest of creation who both share a common destiny. The impact of the human's sinful thought and behaviour is not limited to only humans, but extends over the nature that lives with us. Paul's account of the principal agents presents the human being's condition as a giver who can cause both positive and negative effects on the rest of the creation.

Human beings, as well as animals, have the same situation in terms of

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<sup>700</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 512-13.

<sup>701</sup> Humanity's actions in ancient society were sometimes very brutal towards the rest of creation, especially animals. Robin Lane Fox mentions that, in 2 BCE, Augustus killed 3,500 wild animals in five months for several shows. Trajan also slayed more than 11,000 animals. Hadrian, the successor of Trajan, killed 1000 animals, including 200 lions, during six days for his birthday party (for more information, see Robin Lane Fox, *The Classical World: An Epic History from Homer to Hadrian* (New York: Allen Lane, 2005), 456-57). In 55 BCE, Pompey killed 500 lions at a circus that lasted five days. Shortly before Paul wrote Romans (about 55 CE), Nero and his bodyguard slaughtered 400 bears and 300 lions with Javelins in a hunting festival. See Edward Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), 62 and 68. For Paul, the suffering and mourning of animals were not an abstract matter. Instead, it was a daily-experienced-memorized matter for Paul, who lived in the Roman empire.

suffering and hope. Paul mentions that “not only the creation, but we ourselves [human beings], who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). As N. T. Wright also notes, “The new [creation] is the transformation, not merely the replacement, of the old.”<sup>702</sup> Indeed, the hope of creation is not rapture from the earth or escape from the human body. Tonstad argues that “Hope is not that the immortal soul will be delivered from the prison of the body... Human and non-humans are earthlings and materially constituted, and the believer’s hope is for ‘the redemption of our body’ (8:23).”<sup>703</sup> Sheila E. McGinn has a similar point of view, as follows:

Romans 8:18-23 assumes the integration of humanity with nature and teaches that both strive together for the same freedom ... It is not disembodied ‘spiritual’ humanity that celebrates this freedom and glory, but an embodied humanity enlivened and transformed by the spirit of God (8.11). Adoption by God entails a physical liberation, ‘the redemption of our bodies’ 8:23). Life ‘according to Sprit’ is not some non-corporeal reality, but a glorious freedom in the body, a life in harmony with God and nature - truly a new creation.<sup>704</sup>

What, then, is the redemption of the body? This may link with 1 Cor 15:23-27 in which Paul mentions the order of redemptive events at the Parousia. In this process, Paul states that the final step of the event is the defeat of *death* itself which is the last enemy (Rom. 8:25-27: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death”). This offers some further direction to

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<sup>702</sup> Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007), 175.

<sup>703</sup> Tonstad, *Romans*, 257.

<sup>704</sup> Sheila E. McGinn, ‘All Creation Groans in Labor: Paul’s Theology of Creation in Romans 8. 18-23’, in *Earth, Wind & Fire: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Creation* (ed. Carol J. Dempsey and Mary Margaret Pazdan; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 119.

the idea that the liberation of all creation, including human beings, from the bondage to decay would be death itself and will be delivered in the redemptive process. Moreover, the subjection to futility of all creation is also included in this process (cf. Eccl 3:19: 'For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity'). To conclude, this enables us to think that not only human beings but also the rest of creation will be redeemed, "specifically by a process of renewal rather than by its destruction and re-creation."<sup>705</sup>

#### **5.5.5. Ethics in Romans and the Application of an Ecological Reading to the Korean Interpretative Tradition**

Rom. 8:19-23 offers a full discussion of not only the bondage to decay and subjection to futility of all creation but also the redemption from them. Moreover, this text illustrates that creation groans in hope. In this eschatological text, creation (κτίσις) refers to nature or the nonhuman creation. It is subjected to destruction and decay in the sense of both a moral and physical death. Although Adam's story seems to link Rom. 8's creation story in terms of the futile cycle of death and the struggle of creation, I offer more broadly, as Horrell and other biblical scholars do as shown above, an understanding of human's corruption and wrongdoing in Genesis 3-11. However, the co-groaning of humanity and the rest of creation seems likened to pain in labor (birth pangs) which accompanies suffering and hope. This hope reaches its climax in the revelation of the adopted children of God. In other words, these children of God play a pivotal role in God's redemptive work to turn from groaning to freedom. God's own action is not here explicitly mentioned, though it is implicit in the divine

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<sup>705</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 81.

passives; God's hidden work in the whole redemptive process from bondage to liberation might be taken to imply an important role for those who will share in bringing this about. The children of God must be Christian believers who can achieve creation's hope and God's redemptive action.

I am not denying that Paul's theology and ethics are clearly focused on the inter-human relationship, and especially on the relationship between the congregations of the churches to which Paul wrote. It seems that the central theme of this biblical text is to encourage the members of the churches who are weak and who suffer, so that they will surely have hope for deliverance by God. Moreover, this biblical text does not provide a directly ethical code instructing Christian believers to work for the ultimate goal of creation's restoration. However, I see the possibility of choosing the main principles of Paul's ethics and extending it to apply to the environmental theme. For example, one of the foundational meta-ethical principles in Paul's ethic is the "*kenotic ethic*," which is modeled on Christ's self-emptying and self-giving for others.<sup>706</sup> Paul was using God's humanity as exhibited in the incarnation event as a call for Christians to be similarly subservient to others. If the message of Paul's gospel is based on the *kenotic ethic* which reconciles and liberates all creation with the sacrifice of the Christ, Christians believers also need to equally apply the extended ethical concept to all creation by the same logic. In other words, it is possible that Rom. 8:19-23 may provide a framework of environmental ethics based on the biblical message.

This ecological reading of Rom. 8:19-23 would allow a chance to reconfigure

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<sup>706</sup> Thomas Jay Oord, "Essential Kenosis", in *The Nature of Love: A Theology*, (Denver, MA: Chalice Press, 2010), 149, 155; Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010).



readings and interpretive traditions within Korean Protestantism, which mainly interprets the eschatological vision of the New Testament in terms of cosmic disasters and the salvation of individuals. As mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, commentaries that are published in Korea and are known as trustworthy to the public are still in favour of exegesis which emphasises the total destruction of creation and the salvation of believing human beings. For example, *The Oxford Bible Interpreter* (옥스포드 성서 주석) which was published by a compilation committee consisting of fifty-two biblical scholars and pastors from the Korean mega churches, is one of the best-known commentaries among South Korean ministers and theologians.<sup>707</sup> *The Oxford Bible Interpreter* takes the interpretation of the lexical meaning of the Greek language as the prior methodology in the work of exegesis. In this exegetical process, writers emphasize the human-centred interpretation. Specifically, in the exegetical work on Rom. 8:19-23, writers mention only briefly creation's liberation in the future without discussing it in detail. The commentary does not bring the restoration of creation into focus, saying "Since the whole of creation except for the human being has been groaning, it is regardless to say that Christians who are the children of God, are

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<sup>707</sup> There were many important figures in the members of the compilation committee at that time. These include GyungSig-Han, who is the only South Korean winner of the Templeton Prize and who is also the founder of the YoungRak Church, which is called 'the mother Church of South Korea', and YoungGi-Choi, a senior pastor of a mega church where over million people are registered as congregation. HanUm-Ouk, YoungMok- Choi, HongDo-Kim, SunDo-Kim, JangWhan-Kim, SunWhe-Gack, SamWhan-Kim, GyumEil- Na are the senior pastors of other mega churches where twenty to eighty thousand people are registered as congregation. WonSang-Ji, TeakJin-Lim, DukShin-Kim, HoJun-Yu, JongSoun-Park, SeoWon-Shin, GiChe-Choi were presidents or ex-presidents of different Christian denominations in South Korea. WonSang-Ji, KwanSuk-Oh, JongSung-Lee, SungYoung-Kim, JungLyul-Park, ChangWhan-Park, SangWhun-Lee, KyoungJin-Kim, ByungSe-Oh, SunGi-Kim, SunHo-Lee were chancellors and deans of Seminaries that belonged to different Christian denominations. See, Jejawon, *옥스퍼드 원어 성경 대전 117: 로마서* (*The Oxford Bible Interpreter: Original Text Exposition on Romans* (Seoul: Disciples' Publisher and Bible Net, 2002), 3.

destined for the salvation and glory they would gain at the end of the world.”<sup>708</sup> This interpretation focuses not on the creation’s liberation process from its subjection to futility and the obtainment of humanity’s freedom, but on the liberation and prize earning (glory) of human beings (Christian believers) at the end of the time.

Followed by the exegetical work, there are six sermons that are suggested as good models for application. The titles of the sermons would be translated as “The believers’ suffering on the earth is incomparable to the awaiting glory of heaven”, “Heaven is the place where everything is restored to its original position”, “The people who are in yearning and groan in waiting for the time of salvation are the true believers”, “hope is the face of faith”, “Waiting is the required element in the faith of the believers” and “The believers must liberate the creation from its subjection to futility.” From the titles of the first five sermons, it is clearly shown that the focus of the interpretation and application of the passage is focused on the suffering, hope, and glory of human beings, not on the creation’s. The sixth title might have a nuance that implies the concern and preservation of the creation but the content of the sermon does not. On the contrary, the writers of the sermon define creation as irrational and inferior to the human being. Moreover, the liberation of creation is incidental in comparison to the salvation of the human being.<sup>709</sup> The model sermon provides a recognition that the status of liberation of the creation is a part of a process of human beings’ salvation. The focus is still on the salvation, prizes, and glory that human beings would get.

One clear example through which to illustrate the tendency of Korean

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<sup>708</sup> *The Oxford Bible Interpreter* (옥스포드 성서 주석), 628-29.

<sup>709</sup> *The Oxford Bible Interpreter* (옥스포드 성서 주석), 639-40.

Christianity's biblical interpretation is the lack of publication and translations of volumes that use an ecological approach. In the field of systematic and practical theology, some publications and articles can be found which do imply ecological concern. However, only one book taking an ecological approach to biblical interpretation has been translated into Korea in biblical studies.<sup>710</sup> Most prominent books in ecological bible reading, such as *The Earth Bible Commentary Series* (edited by Norman C. Habel) and *Bible and Ecology*, (Richard Bauckham) and *Greening Paul* (David Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate) are not yet introduced in Korea.

In this circumstance of the Korean mainline church's interpretive tradition, an ecological reading of Rom. 8:19-23 is important for reconfiguring its tradition, and for enhancing the understanding of the relationship between God, humans, and the rest of creation. As we have seen in this chapter, there is ample scope for interpreting Rom. 8:19-23 in light of ecological doctrinal principles, as a text that joins the hopes of humanity and creation, and may be taken to imply a human responsibility to work towards the hope for creation's future liberation. Now, I turn to a detailed examination of the other eschatological text regarding the reconciliation of all creation and the symbiotic relationship between humans and rest of creation in New Jerusalem: Revelation 21: 1-7 and 22:1-5.

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<sup>710</sup> 데이빗 G. 호렐 (David G. Horrell), *성서와 환경: 생태성서신학 입문* (*The Bible and The Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*) translated by 이영미 (Lee Young Me) (Osan city: Hanshin University press, 2014).

## CHAPTER 6

### Eschatological Visions in Rev. 21:1-22:1:1-5

#### 6.1 Introduction

The Book of Revelation and the other eschatological texts already discussed have a profound influence on Korean Christian believers' attitude to engaging in the ecological agenda as well as on their understanding of creation. Of especial importance are the ostensibly terrible images in the Book of Revelation such as the severe destruction of rivers, the great earthquakes, and the catastrophic end of the earth; these shape a negative viewpoint in Christian believers towards nature, as shown above. In addition, the Book of Revelation has been used to "justify environmental destruction as well as intolerance, fundamentalism, war, and violence..."<sup>711</sup> Thus, at first glance, the Book of Revelation does not seem to be a promising source for ecological reading.

Because of the mysterious and multi-dimensional images in the Book of Revelation, readers have interpreted it in various ways through the ages.<sup>712</sup> In the context of this present research, which focuses on the ecological reading of the Book of Revelation, one important enquiry is whether or not the Book of Revelation shows us a positive ecological eschatological vision. The current chapter will mainly aim to shed light on an answer to this question

I assert that the final eschatological visions of the Book of Revelation are – or can be read as – profoundly and positively ecological. This ecological approach to

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<sup>711</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future", in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 206.  
Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 1-14.

reading the book of Revelation focuses mainly on the conflicting visions of two cities: Babylon and the New Jerusalem, which are mostly illustrated in the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation. I argue that the contrasting visions of these two cities concerning social, political, and cultural economy show us the positive eco-eschatological earth-centred vision in the Book of Revelation. The vision of the city of Babylon offers an oracular critique of ecological injustices such as worldwide deforestation and ecological imperialism. The vision of the city of the New Jerusalem then presents us with the promise of a totally renewed urban world, where God takes up residence on Earth, in our midst.<sup>713</sup> In other words, the eschatological visions of the Book of Revelation that propose that the Earth is God's future home can be a source not only for ecological readings of the Book of Revelation but also for encouraging engagement with the ecological agenda today. I hope that this expected result can reconfigure the views of Korean Christians and Christian believers around the world towards New Testament eschatology, and that it will inspire us to voluntarily participate in the process of the ecological renewal of our cities and our world today.

This chapter comprises four elements. The first part is a general description of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5. The second is a brief survey of ecological readings of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5. It introduces the works of five biblical scholars who have applied ecological hermeneutics to this text. The third part deals with the interpretation of several key issues in Rev. 21:1-22:5 and their ecological implications for environmental ethics. The fourth and final part is the conclusion.

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<sup>713</sup> Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future", 214-15.

## 6.2 General Description of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5

The final two chapters of the Book of Revelation predominantly describe the New Jerusalem visions which unveil the eschatological salvation of the entire universe, in particular the earth and its resident creation.<sup>714</sup> Rev. 21:1-22:1-5 is the pinnacle of John's final arguments regarding the eschatological vision that he sees. Chiefly, these two chapters contain important theological ideas such as a new heaven and a new earth (21:1), extinction of the sea (21:1) and death (21:4), the descent of the New Jerusalem (21:2, 11), residence of God in the city of the New Jerusalem (21:3), award of water without cost (21:6), no temple and night in the New Jerusalem (21:22; 22:5), permanent openness of the gates of the city of the New Jerusalem (21:25), the river of the water of life (22:1), and the tree of life, its fruits, and the leaves of healing for the nations and for creation (22:2).

The scenario of the New Jerusalem vision begins in Rev. 21:1 and extends to 22:5. The first image that John sees is the appearance of a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the earth had passed away, and the sea was no more (21:1). This image of Rev. 21:1 is combined with the splendid New Jerusalem vision which comes down to earth from heaven (21:2) and is God's dwelling place, as well as with the picture of the fertile garden (22:1-2). This vision is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1-2 in its eschatological recovery version. Duncan Reid says:

More significantly, it redeems the first dwelling of God with human beings: the Garden of Eden. It is not a return to Eden, because the new dwelling place of God with human beings is a city. This affirms human culture - literally human civilization - and the history of its

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<sup>714</sup> Richard Bauckham, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 126-43; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 1039-40.

development.<sup>715</sup>

This New Jerusalem vision also recollects the new temple of Ezekiel's vision in Ezek. 40-48, especially chapter 47. However, this vision of New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation is a modified version of the new temple in Ezekiel. There are no priestly elites or ritual purity "for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb is its temple" (21:22; cf. Mark 11:22-25). Moreover, different from the gates of the new temple of Ezekiel, the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem will never be closed. It is an open gate through which all kinds of creation, including foreigners and the marginalized people, and even wild animals, can enter the city. Barbara R. Rossing notes, "God's presence is not confined to a temple, but now extends to the entire creation. In other words, Revelation further universalizes and 'democratizes' compared with Ezekiel's elite priestly vision by extending priestly status to all God's people".<sup>716</sup> Furthermore, unlike the vision of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1-2, the New Jerusalem vision is an urban centred primeval garden vision. The image of both "the tree of life" and "the river of life" in 22:2 connotes not only the primeval garden picture of Eden which can be seen in the Genesis creation story but also the new temple vision in Ezekiel:

Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. (Gen. 2:9-10).

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<sup>715</sup> Duncan Reid, "Setting aside the Ladder to Heaven: Revelation 21.1-22.5 from the Perspective of the Earth", in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Cleveland, OH: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 239.

<sup>716</sup> Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future", in *Christianity and Ecology*, 217.

Ezekiel also portrays the image of the trees of the river:

On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing (Ezek. 47:12).

All things considered, the New Jerusalem vision illustrates that the earth is the dwelling place of God. Moreover, this vision shows us a harmonious co-existence between God, humanity and the rest of creation, and the realization of the eschatological vision in both Genesis 1-2 and Ezekiel 40-48.

### **6.3 A Brief Survey of Ecological Readings of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5**

Accompanied by today's ecological issues, many theologians have strived to research the numerous theological ideas of the Book of Revelation, especially Rev. 21:1-22:5, in a way in which this eschatological text can be presented as a positive source for reconfiguring our understanding of creation and New Testament eschatology in relation to the ecological predicament occurring around the world today. Among them, there are five biblical scholars and eco-theologians who have been influential on my exegetical process in Rev. 21:1-22:5: Richard Bauckham, Stephen Moore, Micah D. Kiel, Thomas W. Martin, and Barbara R. Rossing. In this section, I will briefly introduce their research results.



### 6.3.1 Richard Bauckham (1993 and 2010)<sup>717</sup>

Richard Bauckham has written a theological and ecological interpretation of the Book of Revelation which gives a meaningful contribution to not only New Testament scholars but also to ministers. In his book, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Bauckham presents his argument that the Book of Revelation sheds light on God's plan to redeem all of creation. In chapter 6 of this book, he compares the two cities, Babylon (Rome) and the city of the New Jerusalem, as contrasting cities. Both share some characteristics concerning prosperity and political dominion. However, Babylon gained its prosperity through the exploitation and deception of other nations, of humans, and of nature. Bauckham points out the connection between religion and Rome's economics. The Roman imperial cult deluded people that Rome's prosperity and splendour came from the beneficence of the Emperor "who was worshipped as a divine Saviour."<sup>718</sup> He recognises that "for John, Rome's economic exploitation and the corrupting influence of her state religion go hand in hand."<sup>719</sup> On the other hand, the city of the New Jerusalem not only acquires its splendour by the Godhead and the righteousness of its citizenry but also renews all creation to its original wholeness (Rev. 21:3-14).<sup>720</sup> In Bauckham's view, the most important point of the New Jerusalem vision in relation to nature is that "it does not foresee the replacement of an old creation by a new one, but the renewal of the whole creation," even though the

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<sup>717</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New Testament Theology Series, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*; *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

<sup>718</sup> Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 348.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid. 348.

<sup>720</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 126-43, especially 131.

renewal needs to go through a sort of transformation.<sup>721</sup> He also claims that the intertextual link of the New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21-22 is with Gen. 2:1-25 (the Garden of Eden) and Ezek. 47:6-12 (the temple of Ezekiel).<sup>722</sup> However, according to Bauckham, “the New Jerusalem surpasses Eden because the tree of life, from which Adam and Eve did not eat, is now available – multiplied, in fact, as twelve species of tree, whose leaves heal the scars of this world and whose fruit nourishes with eternal sustenance (22:2)” without cost.<sup>723</sup> Moreover, he points out that, overall, the New Jerusalem vision illustrates a harmonious and reciprocal relationship between human beings and nature. Thus, in Bauckham’s view, these features of the New Jerusalem vision enable us to inspire or seek these kinds of relationship in the here and now.

### 6.3.2 Stephen Moore (2006 and 2014)

The inspiring works of Stephen Moore, entitled *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology*<sup>724</sup> and *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament*,<sup>725</sup> apply a postcolonial viewpoint in reading the Book of Revelation. In terms of the New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21-22, Moore notes that there are several problematic images, such as the outsized dimension of the New Jerusalem city, and that no dog is to be admitted to the city. However, he offers a possible eco-theological reading of these problematical issues, suggesting that the gigantic New Jerusalem can be interpreted as metaphor for divine

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<sup>721</sup> Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*, 175-76.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid. 176-77.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid. 177.

<sup>724</sup> Stephen D. Moore, *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014).

<sup>725</sup> Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006).

transcendence,<sup>726</sup> and that dogs being off-limits in the New Jerusalem can be read as either representing the prohibition of depraved humans<sup>727</sup> or as a metaphor to announce the termination of dogs serving for human's benefit, which means the end of the hierarchical relationship between humans and the rest of creation.<sup>728</sup>

The most striking feature of Moore's argument is that the New Jerusalem vision is not a human centred vision but an animal (i.e. a slaughtered ram) centred Christological vision. This vision illustrates the existence of the river of the water of life and the tree of life which provides for the healing and survival of human beings. But, at the starting point of the river of living water, the ultimate domestic animal - an already slaughtered ram - is located in the centre of the city and is worshipped by humans. Moore understands this as follows:

Jesus of Nazareth enters Revelation as a Son of Humanity (1:12-13), transforms into a Lamb (5:6), and trots through the main body of the text in that theriomorphic guise and hence on all fours, only assuming anthropomorphic form again sporadically in 14:14-16 and 19:11-21. But when the shape-shifting eventually ends and the heavenly city arrives and God's Messiah is enthroned with God in the city center as eternal object of incessant worship, it is not as anthropomorph but as theriomorph that he comes into final focus (21:22-23; 22:3; see also 19:7, 9: 21:9, 14).<sup>729</sup>

In other words, the final Christology in the Book of Revelation, which is the last book and chapter of the Bible, reaches its height as "an animal Christology."<sup>730</sup> This is an eco-eschatological image of the Book of Revelation which implores us to rethink the rest of creation, which is in an epoch of mass extinction of animals. I will deal with

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<sup>726</sup> Moore, *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation*, 236.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid. 240.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid. 241.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid. 242.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid. 242.

these theological issues in the main interpretation part of this chapter below.

However, Moore raises a question in terms of the comprehensive images of the Book of Revelation regarding whether or not Revelation is the book with which to resist Roman imperialism, which is the prevalent view of today's biblical scholars. Moore points out that, paradoxically, Roman imperial ideology permeates the Book of Revelation "in its redeployment of the term 'empire' (*basileia*) itself."<sup>731</sup> This is his main argument:

At first and even second glance, Revelation would appear to be an anti-imperial(istic) text that, in effect, announces the transfer of worldwide imperium from the Roman emperor to the heavenly Emperor and his Son and co-regent, the "king of kings and Lord of Lords," (Rev. 19:16; cf. 17:14) ...The paramount question...is whether or to what extent Revelation merely reinscribes, rather than effectively resists, Roman imperial ideology.<sup>732</sup>

In other words, the main question in his argument on the Book of Revelation is that if the author of Revelation claims that "the Roman imperial order is the ultimate object of imitation in Revelation, then, in accordance with the Book's own implicit logic, it [such imperialism] remains the ultimate authority, despite the Book's explicit attempts to unseat it."<sup>733</sup>

Moore concludes that the Book of Revelation "epitomizes the theo-imperialistic orientation that enabled the Roman state effortlessly to absorb Christianity into itself, to turn Christianity into a version of itself, to turn itself into a version of Christianity... Revelation is... more hostile to Rome than any other early Christian text."<sup>734</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse*, 106.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid. 99.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid. 29.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid. 119.

### 6.3.3 Thomas W. Martin

Different from Moore, Thomas W. Martin interprets the eschatological text Rev. 21-22 in relation to the contemporary urban context. He claims that “John of Patmos envisioned a future salvific city [which is] how the future and our cities ought to be shaped.”<sup>735</sup> The New Jerusalem vision offers the built urban environment of the city as salvific.<sup>736</sup> Martin applies the approaches of two scholars who “focus on the juxtaposition of conflicting configurations of space: Wesley Kort and Michel Foucault” as follows:

Space allows me only to say that from Kort I draw *comprehensive* and *social* space and that comprehensive space – a concept friendly to environmental concerns – is revealed at the limits of social spaces. From Foucault I draw *heterotopia* – impossible space revealed in contested places. For both Kort and Foucault, humans tend to totalize place. Conflicted spaces, revealing heterotopias, undermine totalization of space and offer new understanding.”<sup>737</sup>

Martin finds several eco-friendly images in the city of the New Jerusalem, including the gates and wall, and the Temple void. He does not deny that the New Jerusalem is surrounded by gates which can protect from unclean dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, and idolaters (Rev. 22:15). However, these gates cannot function properly due to unguarded walls and the fact that the gates are open permanently. So, if they (dogs... and idolaters) want to enter the city, they can do. In other words, we can imagine unclean people in the holy city of the New Jerusalem. According to Martin, this feature of the gates and walls reveals a symbol of the crashing together of purity

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<sup>735</sup> Thomas M. Martin, “The City as Salvific Space: Heterotopic Place and Environmental Ethics in the New Jerusalem”, *Society of Biblical Literature* Forum 7, No. 2 (2009). Available online at <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=801> Last accessed 1 July 2018.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid.

and impurity as well as alluding to a subversion of the social ideology of exclusion and separation.<sup>738</sup> Furthermore, the absence of a temple is the important theological theme. In real life, “the cities represent concentrations of human, social, and technical functions. Two important concentrated functions creating the city are power and accumulation of excess goods. Architecturally these concentrations are expressed in monumental structures.”<sup>739</sup> In ancient society, monumental structures, and especially temples, played a pivotal role in not only signifying a relationship with God, but also - more importantly – in signifying concentrations of power and accumulation. These monumental buildings usually comprised the centre of the city. Martin notes that today’s monumental buildings in the cities are contained by and replaced with various types of commercial buildings such as mega-department stores, shopping malls, hotels, and company buildings. By eliminating a temple in his eschatological vision of the city of the New Jerusalem, John envisioned “an eviscerated city with no center of power and non-commercial. It has no organized, centralized system of exploitive accumulation vis-à-vis its surrounding territories.”<sup>740</sup> To be more specific, John envisioned God and the slaughtered lamb to have become the temple. God exists everywhere in the city. Martin interprets this to indicate not only a collapsing of the distinction between sacred and profane space, but also the non-existence of the exploitation of humans and the rest of creation in order to accumulate power and luxurious goods. Martin’s profound imagination regarding this eschatological text invites us, and instructs us how, to live as people with nature in contemporary capitalist society.

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<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

### 6.3.4 Micah D. Kiel

Micah D. Kiel's impressive book, *Apocalyptic Ecology: The Book of Revelation, the Earth, and the Future* gives a rich ecological viewpoint on the Book of Revelation. He is concerned with how to carry out engaging in an ecological life and understanding of creation as a Christian believer in the situation of an empire that destroyed the earth and its residents. Kiel introduces, from across the centuries, various interpretive traditions and understandings of the Book of Revelation in relation to the environment. After discussing the date and the place of writing of the Book of Revelation, he deals with John's future vision regarding whether or not he envisions total destruction of the current world or its continuity and renewal. To find this answer, Kiel researched Jewish apocalyptic literature from a time before the Book of Revelation, particularly, I Enoch and Book of Watchers. He found that these apocalyptic texts seem to suggest that there are indeed catastrophic events in God's judgement day. However, the apocalyptic language in these books was a reflection of a Jewish community which was interpreting its surroundings at that time. Kiel points out that "[This] literature ... describes a world left smoldering in the ruins of apocalyptic warfare. They did this, however, not because they thought God wanted to destroy the world, but as a way of expressing dismay over the suffering and destruction they themselves were experiencing."<sup>741</sup> In other words, this apocalyptic language partly expresses their wish to escape from their harsh reality, and reflects their hope that "God will come and fix everything."<sup>742</sup> Moreover, Kiel addresses how the context has influenced the interpretation and reading of the book of Revelation across the centuries. He gives

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<sup>741</sup> Micah D. Kiel, *Apocalyptic Ecology: The Book of Revelation, the Earth, and the Future* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), XXV.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid. 51.

several examples: the illustration of “The Trier Apocalypse,” which is a Latin version of the book of Revelation written in the early ninth century CE; “Beatus Apocalypse” which is a commentary on the Book of Revelation written by a monk of the eighth century (786 CE) named Beatus; the writings on the Book of Revelation of Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202); The Trinity Apocalypse in the thirteenth century<sup>743</sup>; and The Saint John’s Bible, which is the first illuminated manuscript of the Book of Revelation (begun in 1970 and completed in 2011). These literature artworks had different viewpoints. To be more specific, the results are mixed. Some of them illustrated the total destruction of the earth, others do not, depending on their context. For instance, the illustration of the writings on the book of Revelation of Joachim of Fiore depicted the current world to be in apocalyptic chaos due to the birth of the antichrist, and states that this world will be demolished immediately. Kiel notes that this is the influence of the historical context upon reading the Book of Revelation, saying that “ongoing conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Eastern Europe and in the crusades were a ‘nurturing ground’ for apocalypticism.”<sup>744</sup> All things considered, he concludes that the main message of the Book of Revelation does not seem to justify the destruction of nature. Instead, “it calls its readers and viewers into contemplation of the way God, humans, and the environment are all connected.”<sup>745</sup>

Indeed, the Book of Revelation contains plenty of images for environmental ethics. According to Kiel, the main message of the Book of Revelation is to discipline Christian believers concerning God’s plan to destroy the Roman Empire which

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<sup>743</sup> The Trinity Apocalypse, which is a “fully illuminated manuscript accompanied by the text of Revelation in French and an interpretation by a man named Berengaudus.” See Ibid. 101.

<sup>744</sup> Kiel, *Apocalyptic Ecology*, 101. Also see Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1979), 126-42.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid. XXVI.



destroyed and exploited people, nations, nature and the earth (Rev. 11:18).<sup>746</sup> He claims that the nonexistence of the sea in the New Jerusalem vision indicates the demolition of the sea at the hand of God given that it functioned as one of the means by which the Roman Empire exploited all nations and the earth.<sup>747</sup> The Roman Empire's economic and military power was expanded by the seaway. Moreover, John envisions the economic and political system of the New Jerusalem - different to that of Rome - as a salvific economic system giving essential elements for the existence of life, such as living water (21:6) and medicine (22:2). Kiel's environmental implication is a convincing manifestation for contemplating how to live an eco-friendly life in this current world, which is dominated by market economy capitalism.

### **6.3.5 Barbara R. Rossing**

In her book *The Choice Between Two Cities*, Barbara R. Rossing shows her impressive and creative analysis of the Book of Revelation. Rossing applies a rhetorical analysis of the visions of the two contrasting cities - Babylon and the New Jerusalem of Revelation. She argues that "since the two city visions are structured as contrast visions, each should be read in light of the other."<sup>748</sup> Moreover, Rossing thinks that Revelation personifies the two cities as female figures - that is, Babylon as a female prostitute (the evil woman), and, in contrast, the New Jerusalem as a virtuous bride (the good woman). The personified female figures of Revelation contrast in such a way that the hearer is persuaded to resist the way of life of the evil woman (the vice of Babylon) and follow the one of the good woman (the virtue of the New

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<sup>746</sup> Kiel, *Apocalyptic Ecology*, 84-85.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid. 80-81.

<sup>748</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, *Between Two Cities: Whore, Bride and Empire in the Apocalypse* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 1.

Jerusalem).<sup>749</sup> Rossing considers not only that Revelation's rhetorical structure of the juxtaposition of good and evil female figures as personifications of virtue and vice is influenced by Greco-Roman literary culture (mostly by Prodicu's myth of Hercules through the *Tabula of Cebes*), but also sense to discipline and educate the audience through showing the close relationship between the two ways of life of the contrasted women as traced from Jewish wisdom literatures. There are specific contrasting descriptions of the two cities in the book of Revelation: wine and the cup of wrath (Rev. 14 and 16)<sup>750</sup>; the throne of God and the one of the prostitute<sup>751</sup>; the destruction of the prostitute Babylon and the construction of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 17-19 and 21-22)<sup>752</sup>; the poorly constructed walls of the city of Rome and the splendour and elegance of New Jerusalem's walls and gates (Rev. 21-22).<sup>753</sup> According to Rossing, the two politically and economically contrasting cities in the eschatological vision of Revelation can be resources for an eco-friendly earth-centred vision that is urgently needed in the contemporary context of the ecological predicament. She argues that the Babylon vision depicts ecological injustice including ecological imperialism and worldwide deforestation. On the other hand, the New Jerusalem vision presents "the promise of a totally renewed urban world, where God takes up residence on Earth, in our midst. Revelation's vision of God's future home on Earth can empower us to work to renew our cities and our world today."<sup>754</sup>

An interesting point is that, different from the fundamentalist and Premillennial

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<sup>749</sup> Rossing, *Between Two Cities*, 25.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid. 63-65.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid. 67.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid. 87-97.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid. 115-16 and 118-25.

<sup>754</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future", in *Christianity and Ecology*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Dieter Hessel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for World Religion): 205 - 226, particularly, 206.

Dispensationalists' reading of the book of Revelation - which considers God to punish and demolish the earth through catastrophic and ecological disaster - Rossing introduces God as a figure who laments with the earth and cries out "on behalf of the earth and its communities against imperial oppressors."<sup>755</sup> As we have noted above, she denies the traditional common translation of the ancient Greek word *oúai* in English, "woe", which expresses God's curse upon earth (Rev. 8:13; 9:12; 12:12). Instead, she argues that it is to be interpreted as "*alas*", which conveys a level of God's "sympathy or concern for Earth that the English word "woe" does not."<sup>756</sup> All things considered, according to Rossing, Revelation's main critique is not against the environment and nature, but rather against Rome, which was depicted as Babylon and exploited the earth and its residents.

In terms of the New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21-22, Rossing understands this vision to clearly be the antithesis of the Babylonian vision of imperial ideology, violence, and ecological injustice. Different from Babylon, the New Jerusalem offers its economic system, which is, as it was for Kiel, a salvific economic system in which "life and its essentials are given 'without money,' as a gift, even to those who cannot pay for them."<sup>757</sup> Moreover, the city of the New Jerusalem is a more expanded and democratized version as compared to Ezekiel's New Temple. The gates surrounded by jewels of the city of the New Jerusalem not only welcome those who enter the city but also are perpetually opened. Thus, "every foreigner... and those who have no

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<sup>755</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, "God Laments with Us: Climate Change, Apocalypse and the Urgent Kairos Moment," *Ecumenical Review* 62 (July, 2010): 119-130, especially 121.

<sup>756</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, "Alas for Earth! Lament and Resistance in Revelation 12", in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, ed. Norman C. Habel & Vicky Balabanski (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 183.

<sup>757</sup> Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem", 212.

money are invited to enter.”<sup>758</sup> In addition, the striking feature of the New Jerusalem is that there is ‘no temple,’ in contrast to Ezekiel’s New Temple vision. Unlike Ezekiel’s elite priestly vision, the New Jerusalem has no temple. Rossing understands this to indicate that “God’s presence is not confined to a temple, but now extends to the entire creation” which illustrates a more democratized form of vision.<sup>759</sup>

Overall, Rossing’s viewpoint is significant for an ecological reading of the book of Revelation because her reading suggests that the main message of the Book of Revelation is not the destruction of the earth but rather the protection of the earth from its destroyer: Roman imperial ideology. Rossing’s works will be an advantageous resource for an ecological reading of the Book of Revelation.

Thus far, we have discussed those influential biblical scholars who have applied ecological hermeneutics to the book of Revelation. Again, these interpretations indicate the rich potential of this text to contribute to an ecological reading of the New Testament’s eschatology. The next section will address several theological issues in Rev. 21:1-22:5 from an ecological perspective.

#### **6.4 An Ecological Reading of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5**

The Old Testament begins with God’s creation of the heaven and the earth. The New Testament finishes with the description of a new heaven and a new earth and of the coming down of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-2): ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from

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<sup>758</sup> Ibid. 217

<sup>759</sup> Ibid.

God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ Since the first and the last subject of the Christian Bible deals with God’s creation of the heaven and the earth, some might think that the creation story is the subject of the whole Bible. John’s vision in Revelation introduces the new heaven and the new Earth in relation to the New Jerusalem. These aspects generate several theological questions. Do the new heaven and the new earth imply the renewal of the current world or its replacement? Why was the sea not included in God’s new creation process? More broadly, in terms of the New Jerusalem vision, why does the New Jerusalem not exist in heaven but down on the earth? What does the city of the New Jerusalem look like? There are various theological issues, themes, and ideas surrounding John’s New Jerusalem vision for eco-theological exegesis, and I shall focus on several issues: 1. The implied or intended meaning of the new heaven and the new earth concerning continuity or discontinuity with the current world and the banishment of the sea; 2. The principal source of John’s argument concerning the city of the New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21-22; 3. the two contrasting cities in terms of the politics and economics of New Jerusalem and Babylon; 4. The earth as the dwelling place of God; 5. Inside and outside characteristics of the New Jerusalem in relation to God, humans, and the rest of creation. All these theological issues, I think, are significantly important for an ecological reading of the Book of Revelation. The rest of this chapter focuses on shedding light on these interpretative issues.

#### **6.4.1 The Structure of Rev. 21:1-22:1-5**

There are various views in terms of the structural division of Rev. 21-22.<sup>760</sup> Rev. 21:1-

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<sup>760</sup> See, David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 52c, Revelation 17-22* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1108-1115, 1141-1151; Koester, *Revelation*, 741-801; Mark B. Stephens,

8 is the final part of John's revelation, and this vision mainly illustrates the creation of God such as the new heaven and the earth, the New Jerusalem, the new temple, and the new relationships between God, humans, and rest of creatures. Rev. 21:1-8 is divided into two subordinate parts: 21:1-4 (the angelic voice) and 21:5-8 (God's voice). The first verse of the first subordinate part is similar to Rev. 20:11, saying "Then I saw... the earth and the heaven fled from his [God]'s presence, and no place was found for them." Rev. 21:1-4 also consists of seven poetic expressions of God's covenantal dimension of John's new Jerusalem vision:

See, the home of God is among mortals.  
 He will dwell with them;  
 they will be his peoples.  
 God himself will be with them;  
 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
 Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no  
 more,  
 for the first things have passed away.

This structural unit focuses on the event in which the city of the New Jerusalem comes down to the earth because "the longest description in this text unit is devoted to the significance of that event."<sup>761</sup> The second subordinate part (Rev. 21:5-8) begins with a transitional verse 5 consisting of both the conclusion of vv1-4 and introduction of vv 5-8. A linguistic connecting factor of Rev. 21: 1-4 and 5-8 is the demonstrative pronoun

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*Annihilation or Renewal? The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 226-28. See also commentaries which consider Rev. 21:1-22:5 to be a single unit of text: Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 522, 532-33; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1039-1117; Robert M. Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 218-19; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 522, 532-33.

<sup>761</sup> Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 52c, Revelation 17-22*, 1114.

ταῦτα, which can be translated in English as ‘these things.’ This word “refers to the eschatological blessings enumerated in v4.”<sup>762</sup> Moreover, this part (vv. 5-8) depicts not only God’s proclamation but also the characteristics of the New Jerusalem through seven poetic expressions, saying: <sup>763</sup>

God speaks, I am making all things new.

those words are trustworthy and true.

It is done!

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Those who conquer will inherit these things,

I will be their God and they will be my children.

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, their place will be in the lake of fire.

The rest of the verses (21:9-22:5) mainly review and articulate the vision of 21:1-8. The purpose of the last unit (21:9-22:5) is to stress the differences of two contrasting cities: the city of Babylon and the city of the New Jerusalem. Overall, the purpose of Rev. 21:1-22:5 is to discipline readers into leaving Babylon so that they can participate in the city of the new Jerusalem.

#### **6.4.2 Rev. 21:1a: The New Heaven and the New Earth, and No More Sea**

This final vision includes a detailed delineation of the New Jerusalem vision. It begins with the manifestation of the new heaven and the new earth. A similar expression is

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<sup>762</sup> Ibid.

<sup>763</sup> Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 534; Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 52c, Revelation 17-22*, 1113-14.

found at 20:11, which reads “Then, I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them”. Some biblical scholars, such as Stephen Pattemore, construe this to be a simple description of the disappearance of heaven and the earth, which is not related to the survival of them (in terms of their continuation or discontinuation).<sup>764</sup> Others understand it to be the designation of the total destruction of heaven and the earth as follows:

This [Rev. 20:11] signifies the end-time cosmic destruction is apparent further from 21:1, which affirms that ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ replaced the vanishing ‘first heaven and first earth,’ which had fled away. ‘A place was not found for them’ is from Dan. 2:35... where it is used of the destruction of the wicked kingdoms at the end time. Rev. 12:8 makes the same allusion to underscore the inaugurated defeat of the devil and his forces by the death and resurrection of Christ... Now the same Daniel wording is applied to the complete destruction of the entire evil world system, which probably, but not necessarily, includes its material aspects...<sup>765</sup>

The followers of the view that there is discontinuity between the new and old heaven and earth focuses on the usage of ἀπέρχομαι in Rev. 21:1, because this word was generally used to state the meaning of ending and thus to refer to the end of certain conditions in the Book of Revelation. Moreover, the author of Revelation applied this word two times - in 9:12 and 11:14 - to describe the end of woe. Thus, many biblical scholars conclude that the new heaven and the new earth in Rev. 21:1 describe the total annihilation of the entire cosmos and a whole new beginning.<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> Stephen Pattemore, “How Green is your Bible? Ecology and the End of the World in Translation”, *Bible Translator* 58 (2007): 81.

<sup>765</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1032; See, for the same argument, Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 748.

<sup>766</sup> Charles H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Collegeville, PA: Liturgical, 1991), 192; Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John*, trans. John E. Alsup (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress,



However, it is necessary to consider that there are a variety of perspectives on the end time scenario. For example, as Mark B. Stephens mentions, some Jewish literature, especially 1 En. 83:2-5; 1 QHa 11:29-36; Sib. Or. 3.75-92 depict a cosmic catastrophic end of the earth.<sup>767</sup> Others such as Jub. 1:29; 4:26; 23:11-31 illustrate a continuation of the current world and its renewal.<sup>768</sup> In addition, another Jewish literature, 1 Qs IV, 25, offers a vague definition of the last state of the heaven and the earth.<sup>769</sup> As shown above, Jewish manuscripts and interpretive traditions envisioned two kinds of eschatological view: continuation (renewal) and discontinuation (annihilation) of the heaven and the earth. Indeed, Rev. 20:9-10 and 14, which are located before and after Rev. 20:11, do not mean the end of current world. They rather present the final judgment of Babylon by fire. In other words, these texts emphasize “the destruction of earth’s destroyers (11:18), not the destruction of the earth itself.”<sup>770</sup>

Moreover, the word “new,” appears three times in Rev. 21: 1-2. The author of Revelation did not use the common word for new, νέος, which means ‘new’ in respect of time. Instead, John used the word, καινός which means “new in respect of quality.” G. K. Beale compared the difference between νέος and καινός as follows:

There is a qualitative distinction between the two world orders. καινός (“new”) usually indicates newness in terms of quality, not time; newness in time is a typical nuance of νέος, .... The ‘first’ was impermanent and temporary, whereas the ‘second’ is to be permanent and enduring.<sup>771</sup>

Considering the meaning of ‘new,’ it can also be said that the new heaven and the new

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1993), 235; Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, 1117; Osborne, *Revelation*, 729.

<sup>767</sup> Mark B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?: The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament / Vol 2, 112. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. Kindle Edition, 112.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.

<sup>769</sup> See Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal?*, 46-116; Hahne, *Corruption and Redemption*, 153-65.

<sup>770</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 795.

<sup>771</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1040.

earth in Rev. 21:1 are not newly created, but renewals of the old heaven and the old earth. To be more specific, the new heaven and the new earth in the Book of Revelation is not God's creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*). Koester pointed out "one might think of God's creative action transforming the existing world from sorrow into blessedness (Isa 41:19-20; 45:8; 65:18)."<sup>772</sup> Pablo Richard also notes that at least five signs of renewal can be found in Rev. 21:1 - 22:5. 1. The sea was no more (21:1). 2. Death will be no more (21:4). 3. Mourning and pain will be no more (21:4). 4. Nothing accusatory will be found there anymore (22:3). 5. Night will be no more (22:5 and 21:25)."<sup>773</sup> These five themes from the Book of Revelation seem to illustrate the transformation of the world as being the renewal of the old one, not the new creation. Steven Bouma-Prediger also points out that the manifestation of the new heaven and the new earth in Rev. 21:1 does not indicate the discontinuation of the old one, but rather, "new here connotes new in quality, in contrast to what is old."<sup>774</sup> He pays particular attention to the next two passages - Rev. 21:2-3 - which indicate not the rapture of faithful believers but the descending of the New Jerusalem to the earth from heaven to "transform and renew the earth,"<sup>775</sup> and understands it as being a renewed earth in quality. Moreover, Eugene Boring construes this as follows:

Even though the first earth and the first heaven have passed away, the scene continues very much as a this-worldly scene. This is due, in part, to the fact that the other world can be spoken of only in language and images from this world. More importantly, it is an affirmation of the significance of this world and history, even after the new heaven and new earth arrive ... The advent of the

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<sup>772</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 794.

<sup>773</sup> Pablo Richard, *Apocalypse: A People's Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1995), 160.

<sup>774</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 107.

<sup>775</sup> Reid, "Setting Aside the Ladder to Heaven: Revelation 21.-22.5 from the Perspective of the Earth", 242.

heavenly city does not abolish all human efforts to build a decent earthly civilization but fulfills them. God does not make 'all new things,' but 'all things new' (21:5).<sup>776</sup>

As shown above, it is clear that we have an ambivalent interpretive legacy of the new heaven and the new earth: it will either be continuation or discontinuation. However, usage of the word καινός, the five renewed things in the New Jerusalem vision, and the earthly kingdom of God, I think, enable us to move towards a positive ecological reading of the book of Revelation.

#### **6.4.3 Rev. 21:1b: No More Sea**

Rev. 21:1 finishes with the manifestation of "no more sea." At first glance, it thus seems that the New Jerusalem vision has a non-ecological feature, because the sea and ocean are usually considered precious for living creatures. Why does the new Jerusalem vision show us the vanished sea? The Greek word θάλασσα, which is translated as 'sea' in English, holds several possible meanings in this passage. Beale lists the five identifications of the sea as follows:

(1) The origin of cosmic evil (especially in the light of OT background; so 4:6; 12:18; 13:1; 15:2), (2) the unbelieving, rebellious nations who cause tribulation for God's people (12:18; 13:1; Isa. 57:20; cf. Rev. 17:2, 6). (3) the place of the dead (20:13), (4) the primary location of the world's idolatrous trade activity (18:10-19), (5) a literal body of water, sometimes mentioned together with 'the earth,' used as a synecdoche in which the sea as a part of the old creation represents the totality of it (5:13; 7:1-3; 8:8-9; 10:2, 5-6, 8; 14:7; 16:3...)<sup>777</sup>

The majority of biblical scholars understand the 'sea' image in light of the Bible's

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<sup>776</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation: Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 220.

<sup>777</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1042.

chaos tradition (numbers 1 and 3) and Beale considers this text to contain all five definitions.<sup>778</sup> As Catherine Keller notes, the sea elsewhere in the Book of Revelation is the place of evil or “the mythical marine chaos”<sup>779</sup> (Rev. 13:1) and a location in which commercial ships sail (Rev. 8:9, 18:11-17).<sup>780</sup> In order to find the proper meaning of ‘the vanished sea,’ it is necessary to unveil the purpose of the writing of the Book of Revelation. Many biblical scholars notice that the author of Revelation sharply symbolized the Roman empire as Babylon.<sup>781</sup> Babylon was remembered as a former imperial power over Israel, and to have taken its people into captivity (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2). Moreover, the last two chapters - Rev. 21-22 - which shed light on the New Jerusalem vision, compare the different characteristics between the two contrasting cities of Babylon and New Jerusalem.<sup>782</sup> As Kiel notes, one of the purposes of Revelation was to “critique the dominance of Rome.”<sup>783</sup> The author of Revelation intends to demonstrate that the universe is controlled not by Rome, but by God, and that God will punish the Roman empire which is the destroyer of the world and nature. Indeed, for the Roman empire, the road that was the sea had a significant role in not only shipping luxurious goods and amassing prosperity but also in

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<sup>778</sup> Ibid. 1042-46.

<sup>779</sup> Catherine Keller, “No More Sea: The Lost Chaos of the Eschaton,” in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for the study of World Religions, 2000), 185.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid. 183-89.

<sup>781</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, “River of Life in God’s New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth’s Future”, in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, 205-19; Kiel, *Apocalyptic Ecology*, xvii-xxvii; Keller, “No More Sea: The Lost Chaos of the Eschaton”, 186; Koester, *Revelation*, 794; Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 52c, Revelation 17-22*, Lxiii; In particular, Beale explained the historical background in which Rome is regarded as Babylon in relation to the Jewish war between Rome and destruction of Jerusalem temple. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 18-19.

<sup>782</sup> Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), xix-xxx.

<sup>783</sup> Kiel, *Apocalyptic Ecology*, 23.

controlling and occupying other nations' territories.<sup>784</sup> In other words, the omnipotence of the Roman empire was enabled by the maritime trade routes. Reid points out that "it [the sea] is a threat because it has been enslaved; it is in servitude to the merchant fleets of Rome."<sup>785</sup> Bauckham quotes from Aelius Aristides, who celebrated Roman empire's sea trade system for being a main route for supplying Rome with luxurious goods from the colonized people and nations:

Here is brought from every land and sea all the crops of the seasons and the produce of each land, river, lake, as well as of the arts of the Greeks and barbarians ... So many merchant ships arrive here, conveying every kind of goods from every people every hour and every day. So that the city is like a factory common to the whole earth. It is possible to see so many cargoes from India and even from Arabia Felix, if you wish, that one imagines that for the future, the trees are left bare for the people there and that they must come here to beg for their own produce if they need anything. Again there can be seen clothing from Babylon and ornaments from the barbarian world beyond ... Your farmlands are Egypt, Syria and all of Africa which is cultivated. The arrivals and departures of the ships never stop, so that one would express admiration not only for the harbor, but even for the sea ... So everything comes together here, seafaring, farming ... all the crafts that exist or have existed, all that is produced or grown. Whatever one does not see here, is not a thing which has existed or exists, so that it is not easy to decide which has the greater superiority, the city in regard to present day cities, or the empire in regard to the empires which have gone before. (Aelius Aristides, Orations 26. 13).<sup>786</sup>

The Roman Empire absorbed all kinds of resources of the earth by exploiting and

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<sup>784</sup> Harry O. Maier, "There's New World Coming! Reading the Apocalypse in the Shadow of the Cannadian Rockies", in *The Earth Story in the New Testament*, ed. Norman C. Habel (New York, NY: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 175-77.

<sup>785</sup> Reid, "Setting Aside the Ladder to Heaven: Revelation 21.-22.5 from the Perspective of the Earth", 233.

<sup>786</sup> Quoted in Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1993), 375-76. Also see, Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future", 207, quoting from Aelius Aristides Orations 26; trans Charles A. Behr, in P. Aelius Aristides, *The Complete Works of P. Aelius Aristides*, 2 Vols. (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1981).

colonizing other countries and their people and nature. The international sea trade was the most expedient way of exploiting the natural resources and even extending the military occupation of other nations. Thus, John illustrates God's punishment of Roman's merchant fleets of ships in Rev. 8:9: A third of the sea turning to blood ... and a third of the ships were destroyed. Rev. 17-18 critiques the Roman Empire's commerce more generally - sometimes in veiled terms - and its effects on the environment. Rev. 11:18 remarks on God "destroying the destroyers of the earth," and 18:6 calls for a repayment in kind. Rev. 17:16 refers to the body of the "whore," symbolizing Rome, being "desolated" and made naked by the ten horns (Roman client kings): "The waters that you saw, where the whore is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire (17:16-17)." The theological idea of repayment in kind is in play here. The Greek verb ἐρημόω, which is interpreted as "desolate" in English, was used to depict the depopulation of the colonized cities, nations, and environment by the Roman Empire. Rev. 18:17 also applied the similar form of same verb ἠρημώθη: "For in one hour all this wealth has been laid waste". Jewish historian Josephus applied ἐρημόω and its cognates to demonstrate the predicament of the environment of Jerusalem in the Roman repression of the Jewish revolt of 66-70. Rossing quotes the words of Josephus as follows:

Pitiful too was the aspect of the country, sites formerly beautified with trees and parks now reduced to an utter desert (*eremothe*) and stripped bare of timber, and no stranger who had seen the old Judaea and the entrancingly beautiful suburbs of her capital, and now beheld her present desolation (*eremian*), could have refrained

from tears ... (Josephus, Jewish War 6.6-7)<sup>787</sup>

There are those who made enormous profits from the economic dominance of the Roman Empire: the kings, the merchants, and the shipmasters (18:9-19). John symbolized Rome as Babylon, as well as a prostitute who seduces people and nations with Roman propaganda: economical and political prosperity achieved by the *Pax Romana*. Rome is not a low class prostitute, but a courtesan who leads a luxurious lifestyle through wearing expensive dresses and jewelry at her customers' expense. Rev. 17: 4-5 illustrates this: 'The woman [prostitute] was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; And on her forehead was written a name, a mystery Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations'. The courtesan's dresses and jewels are illustrated again in Rev. 18:16. Rome (Babylon and a courtesan) enjoys her prosperity at the expense of colonized people and nations. Bauckham notes that "Rome is a harlot because her associations with the peoples of her empire are for her own economic benefit. To those who associate with her she offers the supposed benefits of the *Pax Romana*, much lauded in the Roman propaganda of this period."<sup>788</sup> Indeed, prophets in Hebrew scripture do not symbolize Babylon as a prostitute. However, Isaiah 23:15-18 portrays Tyre<sup>789</sup> as a prostitute. Bauckham also points out "The reference there is obviously to the vast trading activity through which the city of Tyre had grown rich. Tyre's commercial enterprise is compared with prostitution because it is association with other nations for

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<sup>787</sup> Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem", quoting from Josephus' *Jewish War* 6.6-7.

<sup>788</sup> Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 347.

<sup>789</sup> Tyre was a Port city of the ancient Phoenician in Southern Lebanon.

the sake of profit.”<sup>790</sup> Revelation 18 depicts not only how they accumulated wealth but also shows a lament of rich, merchants, and powerful individuals when the Roman Empire, which had kept and expanded their wealth, falls by God’s punishment. Moreover, the shipping lists of the Roman Empire’s merchant ships in Rev. 18:12-13 not only explicitly shows the desolated landscape of colonized countries by Rome, but it also implies the Roman Empire’s unfair seaborne trade, from the natural resources and wild animals to human beings (slaves) taken from colonized countries throughout the Mediterranean basin. The Roman merchants brought strong woods such as cedars and citrus trees from regions of North Africa and the Lebanon in order to build military weapons, chariots, and strong battle ships which could cover long distance voyages. These areas were the regions which incurred enormous ecological destruction in the era of the Roman Empire.<sup>791</sup> In the ancient society, politics, economics, and religion cannot be separated. Roman religion served to justify the exploitation of the colonized people and nations. Bauckham acknowledges its influence saying that “for John, Rome’s economic exploitation and the corrupting influence of her state religion go hand in hand.”<sup>792</sup>

As shown above, John shed light on the outcome of the Roman Empire’s insatiable appetites to exploit, strip, and destroy the natural environment, and the people and nations in its captivity. That is why the sea, the main route of exploitation of the earth by Rome, does not show up in Revelation’s vision of “the new heaven and

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<sup>790</sup> Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 346.

<sup>791</sup> David J. Hawkin, “The Critique of Ideology in the Book of Revelation and its Implications for Ecology”, *Ecotheology* 8, no.2 (2003): 169-70. For a more detailed expression of the environmental predicament of colonized countries by Rome’s mining, see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Vol. 9, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952], 34.20; Kiel, *Apocalyptic Ecology*, 65-68.

<sup>792</sup> Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 348.



the new earth”.

#### **6.4.4 Rev. 21: 1-27 Tour of The City of the New Jerusalem**

Rev. 21:2 starts with the manifestation of “the holy city of the New (καινήν) Jerusalem.” The interesting point is that contrary to the Premillennial Dispensationalist’s point of view regarding the rapture of the people towards heaven, the city of the New Jerusalem actually comes down out of heaven. Heaven is one of central themes in the book of Revelation, but it is no longer mentioned after Rev. 21:2, because God’s throne is brought down to the earth. It is contrasted with the Premillennial Dispensationalist’s interpretation which encourages escapism. The future dwelling place of all creation who are residents of the earth will be with God on the earth. In other words, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them (21:3). The word “dwell” in Rev. 21:3 can be seen in the Gospel of John 1: 14: “the Word became flesh and lived among us” and the Gospel of Matthew 1:23: “they shall name him [Jesus] Emmanuel, which means, God is with us.” Indeed, the expression of God’s dwelling in the earth does not mean the future state of the earth. As shown in chapters 1-4 of this thesis, Premillennial Dispensationalists insist that catastrophic events must occur prior to the fulfillment of the New Jerusalem vision. The first event would be rapture of faithful believer, then the seven years tribulation, then millennial reign, then the last judgment... They regard the vision of the New Jerusalem as a distant future. But biblical eschatology does not work based on a chronological order. The Book of Revelation especially shows us a non-chronological order of prediction. Revelation declares that God and the slain lamb already reign from the outset. Rev. 11:15 shows us an angel’s proclamation: “The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of

our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.” The slain lamb [Jesus] is already the “Lord of lords and King over the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:14).” Rev. 21:6 also says “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” Although the reign of Christ is not yet fulfilled totally, God allows it to be tasted even now. Thus, Christian believers always live in a certain tension between the already and the not yet of the reign of God. Rossing says “Revelation’s New Jerusalem offers both a future hope and a present reality that is breaking into our world even now. God’s time is not linear... Revelation invites us to enter into God’s vision for our world even now, and to live in terms of this vision.”<sup>793</sup>

It is important to note that the New Jerusalem is also illustrated as a bride (νύμφη) who is adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2). The first illustration of a bride appears in Rev. 19:7-9 which plays a pivotal role as a preview of the New Jerusalem vision which contrasts with the Babylon vision. After the fall of Babylon in chapter 18, twenty-four elders and the four living creatures worship God and say hallelujah several times in Rev. 19: 1-6.<sup>794</sup> After the last halleluia, Rev. 19: 7-8 provides the first mention about a female figure (γυνή)<sup>795</sup> who dresses and prepares herself ready for a wedding. “Her marriage to the lamb is announced with the joyous call to the audience to give glory to God.”<sup>796</sup> Rev. 19:7-9 illustrates it as follows: Let us rejoice and exult and give him [God] the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to

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<sup>793</sup> Barbara R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004), 149.

<sup>794</sup> Rossing, *Between Two Cities*, 135.

<sup>795</sup> Rossing notes that “The reading γυνή (woman) is much better attested than νύμφη (bride) in the manuscript evidence for Rev. 19:7. It is unfortunate that both the RSV and NRSV translate γυνή as ‘bride’, thereby obscuring the parallelism with the ‘woman’ (γυνή) of Revelation 17-18”. See, *Ibid*, 136.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid*. 136.

me, “write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This preview in 19:7-9 is significant not only for introducing the city of the New Jerusalem as a pure and good bridal woman before the main entrance of her depiction in Rev. 21-22, but it also is to encourage the audience to take part in their own role as members in this event. The author of the Book of Revelation introduces the good bridal woman as the counterpart of the evil-female figure Babylon by introducing the bridal woman after fall of Babylon. Rev. 21:2 transforms this female figure into a city: “And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven”. Like the good woman in Rev. 19:7-9, the city, New Jerusalem, is considered as the antithesis of the city of Babylon (Rome) which is illustrated as the main culprit of ecological injustice, violence, and abuse of the earth. Overall, the Book of Revelation presents great wealth in both Babylon and the New Jerusalem. According to Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, the wealth of the city of the New Jerusalem “surpasses that of Solomon’s temple (2 Chron. 3).”<sup>797</sup> However, in contrast with the city of Babylon, which gains its profit by a commodity achieved through exploitation of other countries and nature, the way in which “the wealth of the city [New Jerusalem] is used in communal ways - it lined the streets and gates and walls – repudiates the centralization of wealth under the Solomonic regime (2 Chron. 9).”<sup>798</sup> To be more specific, the city of the New Jerusalem has a salvific economic system which gives the necessities of life without cost. One of the main images in the city of the New Jerusalem is “living water without cost” which is freely awarded by God. This is the God’s first promise from the throne in the city of the New Jerusalem: To the

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<sup>797</sup> Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, 188.

<sup>798</sup> Ibid. 188-89.

thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life (Rev. 21:6). This promise is again mentioned in Rev. 22:17: Let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. Rossing notes that the manifestation, “giving water without cost” is one of the main characteristics in the city of the New Jerusalem as contrasted with Babylon:

In the overall argument of Revelation, the invitation to drink from the ‘spring’ (pegai) of the water of life in New Jerusalem functions as healing imagery, a contrast to the deadly ‘springs’ of waters that turned to blood and became undrinkable (Rev. 16:4). As a healing contrast also to the exploitive economy of Babylon, New Jerusalem offers a gift economy in which water and other essentials of life are available ‘without cost.’<sup>799</sup>

Different from the oppressive economy of Babylon, the city of the New Jerusalem shows us a gift economy in which water (Rev. 21:6,7), fruit, and healing leaves (medicine: Rev. 22:2) are provided to all of the earth community without payment.

Another characteristic of the New Jerusalem is that there is no central temple and that the gates are open permanently. Rev. 21:9-27 shows us the architectural wonder of the city of the New Jerusalem which is modelled on Ezek. 40-48. This text highlights the openness and invitational character of the New Jerusalem. Although Ezekiel’s gates function as exits (Ezek. 48:30), not entrances, the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem function as entrances, not exits: Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the Tree of Life and may enter the city by the gates (Rev. 22:14). Moreover, the city’s splendid gates which are decorated with precious jewels such as jasper, sapphire, emerald, and topaz are opened permanently so that people can enter into the city through walking on its golden streets. Thus, the

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<sup>799</sup> Rossing, “River of Life in God’s New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth’s Future”, 216.

city of the New Jerusalem is a welcoming city, even to foreigners and people who have no money. Some might say that there is some problematic manifestation in terms of this eligibility rule for entering New Jerusalem in Rev. 21: 7-8 and 21:27: “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:7-8). “But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). However, many biblical scholars consider it “not as predictive but as hortatory.”<sup>800</sup> For example, Craig R. Koester notes that the “warning about impurity is designed to move people to resist sin and evil in the present, the promise of life through the scroll of the Lamb fosters hope for future.”<sup>801</sup> In this point of view, the main intention of this statement is not to declare an eternal prohibition from entering the city of the New Jerusalem or damnation forever, but rather to exhort the hearers to faithfulness and repentance. We can find a similar hortatory approach in Gal. 5:19-23 and Eph 5:3-5 which use the rhetoric of vice and offender lists. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza notes that the vice-virtue rhetoric was extremely popular for exhortation of audiences in Jewish wisdom literature.<sup>802</sup> David Aune also mentions that Hellenistic moralists used the vice-virtue list.<sup>803</sup>

Interestingly, different from Ezekiel’s vision, there is no temple in the city of the New Jerusalem, because the Lord God the almighty and the Lamb is its temple (Rev.

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<sup>800</sup> Eugene Boring, *Revelation: Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 220; David E. Aune, “The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre”, *Semeia* 36 (1986), 65-96; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 105-115 and 129-131; *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, Proclamation Commentaries, 1991); Rossing, *Between Two Cities*, 156.

<sup>801</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 833.

<sup>802</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Phenomenon of Early Christian Apocalyptic: Some Reflection on Method”, in Hellholm, *Apocalypticism*, 295-314.

<sup>803</sup> David E. Aune, *The New Testament Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James & Co, 1988), 195-96.

21:22). The temple played a significant role in the areas of politics, economics, culture, and religion in ancient society. The Jerusalem temple also functioned as the main centre of religious and cultural life for Jewish people. Moreover, temples played a pivotal role in the Roman imperial cult, which infused Rome's religious, political, and cultural propaganda to those who were under Rome's control in the Roman imperial period. Some cities with temples were considered to be loyal to particular gods and kings. For example, Ephesus was well-known for having the temple of Artemis, which included shrines to the Roman imperial cult. Instead of the temple, which was foundational to the corrupting influence of the imperial power system, the author of Revelation located God's throne and the slaughtered Lamb in the centre of the New Jerusalem city to propose the new power system by God and the slaughtered Lamb:

The New Jerusalem vision reflects a different power structure. Its defining element is the presence of God and the Lamb, and the features of the city reflect the character of their rule (Rev 21:22-23; 22:1, 2, 5). God's fundamental identity is the Creator, who is worthy of power because he brought all things into being (4:11). As the Creator, God rid the earth of its destroyers, and his work culminated in new creation (11:18; 21:1)...New Jerusalem critiques the power structures of this world from a perspective that is not captive to this world. The vision calls for renewed trust in God in the present by showing that God's purposes extend far beyond the present, culminating in a future for the world that can be glimpsed through faith but never controlled.<sup>804</sup>

In other words, the absence of a temple in the city of the New Jerusalem indicates elimination of the influence of the Babylon who is destroyer of the earth (Rev. 11:18). It shows us the eco-friendly feature of the kingdom of God, the city of the New Jerusalem. The city does not run by exploitation of the earth and its resources but by God's mercy who gives water without wanting payment.

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<sup>804</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 827.

It is very interesting that the writer of the Book of Revelation illustrates Christ as a “Lamb or slaughtered Lamb,” not using the powerful animal images.<sup>805</sup> Since Revelation employs the image of a “Lamb or slaughtered Lamb,” investigating it can be beneficial for a proper understanding of the New Jerusalem vision and its ethical implication.

According to Loren L. Johns, “the Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse has an ethical force. The Seer sees in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ both the decisive victory over evil, Babylon, in history and the pattern for Christians’ nonviolent resistance to Babylon.”<sup>806</sup> I agree with this idea that the eschatological New Jerusalem vision of the book of Revelation offers us a picture of resistance by using the blood of the Lamb non-violently against the evil regime of Babylon/Rome, which exists in the seductive idolatry of the “domination system” of violence towards people, nations, and the earth.<sup>807</sup> The slaughtered Lamb image depicts both nonviolent resistance and vulnerability and therefore how the author of Revelation wants to direct believers to imitate these qualities. There is therefore a close relationship between slaughtered Lamb Christology and ethics in the figure of the Lamb.

#### **6.4.4.a. “ἀρνίον”: Lamb or Ram ?**

The word “ἀρνίον” is used thirty times in the New Testament, and the word occurs consistently in Revelation twenty-nine times and once in John 21:15.<sup>808</sup> According to Johns, “In the Apocalypse ἀρνίον refers once to a ‘counter figure’ of Christ in 13:11

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<sup>805</sup> There are six uses of the slaughtered Lamb image in the book of Revelation: 5:6, 12; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8.

<sup>806</sup> Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tubingen: Coronet Books Inc, 2003), 20.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid. 14-18.

<sup>808</sup> Stephen S. Smaller, *The Revelation to John*, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 131; Slater, 163-64, 167.

and the other twenty eight times as a title for Christ... it (ἀρνίον) appears more than twice as often as any other name or image for Christ - even more than the simple name Ἰησοῦς or the title Χριστοῦ<sup>809</sup> Based on this information, we can assume that the author of Revelation usually applies the word “ἀρνίον” rather than the word Ἰησοῦς in order to explain something about the nature of Christ.

The word “ἀρνίον” does not mean an adult ram, but a young sheep or lamb. That evokes a problematical issue because “ἀρνίον” of 5:6 and 13:11 in Revelation has horns. Charles mentions that some lambs had horns, but he also says that in most cases lambs do not have horns.<sup>810</sup> Furthermore, the Lamb in these passages even has seven horns.

In other apocalyptic literature, images of horns suggest a sign of strength and power. For example, the beasts of Daniel having horns (Daniel 7:21) indicate kings' power or military strength (Daniel 8:5-7). In 1 Enoch, the Maccabees, who are symbolized as lambs, became powerful figures, because they have horns that continue to grow (90:9). “This same text links the power symbolized by the horn with vision or insight.”<sup>811</sup> Thus, the lamb having seven horns and seven eyes in this chapter should be understood as a vigorous and majestic image. Moreover, the author of Revelation introduces the lamb as a figure worthy of “power” (δύναμις Rev. 5:12) and a conqueror who defeats other kings in war. These characteristics hardly sound like a normal lamb.<sup>812</sup>

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<sup>809</sup> Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tubingen: Coronet Books Inc, 2003), 22.

<sup>810</sup> R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, Vol. 2. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 452.

<sup>811</sup> Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 167.

<sup>812</sup> John, *The Lamb Christology*, 24.



#### 6.4.4.b. The Central Scene, Nonviolent Christology and Ethics

The story of the Lamb in chapter 5 shows the scroll in the right hand of one seated on the throne. And a mighty angel proclaims with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” No one can do so; the seer begins to weep bitterly. But he stops weeping because of an elder’s announcement that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,<sup>813</sup> has conquered. So the seer could see that the Lamb opens the scroll. The seer does not show what the scroll contains. However, the breaking of the seals in Revelation 6-8 is closely related with the scroll in some way with the realization of God’s will in history or authority over the course of history. The point is that not only does the Lamb function as a main key in terms of unveiling both God’s plan for human beings and the revelation of how God works in history, but also the Lamb acts as a “window” through whom God is revealed (1:1 a revelation of Jesus).<sup>814</sup>

In the next scene, the most essential scene in chapter 5 of the book of Revelation, “a lamb standing as slaughtered” lies at the theological heart of the Apocalypse. “It is specifically designed to communicate the shock, irony, and ethical import of his message that *the conquering one conquers by being a slain lamb*, not a devouring lion.”<sup>815</sup> In other words, “the seer saw something of the cosmic significance of the death of Jesus – not just as a means of salvation from sins, but as the revelation of

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<sup>813</sup> After searching the symbolic meaning of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, Johns defines “Lion” as “danger” or the “power of sheer violence”. “The tribe of Judah” as associated with those eschatological hopes for a political redeemer that emphasized the powerful aggression of Israel toward its Gentile neighbours, and “the Root” as the political aspiration of Jewish people for their messiah. See Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 164-68.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid. 163.

<sup>815</sup> Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 159.

God's will for dealing with violent evil and the means of unfolding God's plan."<sup>816</sup>

In this scene, the seer presents a central reversal in Revelation by showing the scene of "a lamb standing as slaughtered" and thus revealing a redefinition of power. The slaughtered lamb infers vulnerability in danger. Moore says, "As slaughtered sacrifice, the Lamb is a victim of the war and has the war wounds to prove it."<sup>817</sup> The slain Lamb does not represent only a symbol of weakness and vulnerability, but also shows its power and discernment because it has symbols, the seven horns and seven eyes, which designate meaning of the fullness of strength and wisdom.

However, the power of Lamb is defined and reconceived as consistent and nonviolent resistance which finally leads the Lamb to death. Ironically, the slain Lamb rose from the dead.<sup>818</sup> "The Seer does not represent Christ as lamb in order to suggest his "ability to control others based on an implied sanction of force" rather, he represents Christ as lamb in order to represent the vulnerability that inevitably accompanies faithful witness. Such a faithful and vulnerable witness is what enables the believers to share in Christ's victory (3:21)."<sup>819</sup>

We clearly see here a close relationship between slaughtered Lamb Christology and ethics in the New Jerusalem vision. The author of Revelation invites readers into a certain way of living in and seeing the world by showing the slain Lamb. For the Seer, a proper response against Babylon does not mean self-contentment's surrender and assimilation, or violent resistance. Rather, the proper response to Babylon is to follow the nonviolent resistance of Christ as "slain Lamb" – a resistance that has as its

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<sup>816</sup> Ibid. 205.

<sup>817</sup> Moore, *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology*, 239.

<sup>818</sup> Brian K. Blount, *CAN I GET A WITNESS? Reading Revelation through African American Culture*, (Louisville: WJK Press, 2005), 30; Ibid., 161.

<sup>819</sup> Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 204.

inspiration Jesus' own yes to God and no to human violence - that may well lead to martyrdom. The image of the slaughtered Lamb in the vision of the New Jerusalem encourages us to cease the Babylonian life style which leads to the destruction and exploitation of human and nature.

#### **6.4.5 Rev. 22: 2-5: The Tree of Life and its Fruit**

The city of the new Jerusalem has the Tree of Life which produces its twelve kinds of fruit each month and the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations. It is located on either side of the river which flows from the throne of God (Rev. 22:2). We can find the intertextual link of the Tree of Life in Ezekiel 47 and Genesis 2-3 which illustrate the images of the temple in Ezekiel and the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden story in Genesis. Rev. 22: 2 is similar to Ezekiel 47:12 which says "on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary."

The first usage of the word "the Tree of Life" in the book of Revelation appears in Rev. 2:7 which is the letter to the Ephesian Christian community (Rev. 2:1-7). In this letter, John praises the Ephesian Christian community not only for their works, toil, and patient endurance, but also for testing of the Nicolaitans who are false apostles (Rev.2:2, 6). He then rebukes them for throwing away the love that they had at first (Rev. 2:4) and encourages them to repent of it and love as they did at first (Rev. 2:5). The closing verse in this letter ends by referring to permission "to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God (δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>820</sup>

In terms of the Tree of Life in the Book of Revelation, we need to take into account the

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<sup>820</sup> See Koester, *Revelation*, 834-36.

Roman Imperial and the ancient Near Eastern cultures' understanding of a sacred tree.<sup>821</sup> They understood it as a symbolic representation of prosperity, eternity, and life. The role of the sacred tree is important in the Roman imperial context to promote the imperial propaganda not only to Roman citizens especially, and its elites, but also to those who live in countries under their control. Vegetal imagery including the sacred tree is used to propagate validity of the Roman emperor's rule as the earthly divine who controls the earth and its resources through the subjugation of people and nations. One of the methods that delivered Roman imperial ideologies among the largely illiterate people in the first century Greco-Roman context was visual language such as stone statues, temple buildings and their ornaments which were in walls and ceilings. Children in the Greco-Roman time were educated to make narratives from visual images from their early age. Teachers taught them to recite the story lines of fables which were included in the illustrations and then the children should speak the story lines that they remembered from varying starting points.<sup>822</sup> They also could interpret the monuments' iconography as trained. Although the elite would be the main audience to enter this educational system, the monuments' iconographical records could convey imperial propaganda to both elite people and others who saw the monument's iconography. Augustus, the first Emperor of the Roman Empire, used it to legitimate the idea of his eternal reign over the earth as saviour. The Ara Pacis Augustae, altar of Augustan peace, is a good example to show it. It was commissioned by the Roman Senate on July 4 13 BC to honour the return of Augustus after the victory over Hispania and Gaul. It was also consecrated on

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<sup>821</sup> George Lechler, "The Tree of Life in Indo-European and Islamic Cultures", *Ars Islamica* 4 (1937): 369-419.

<sup>822</sup> John Pollini, *From Republic to Empire: Rhetoric, Religion, and Power in the Visual Culture of Rome* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 207.

January 30, 9 BC. It displayed how Augustus brought about the Golden age and the prosperity of Rome. The northern facade displayed a procession of Senators who wear laurel wreaths and togas which symbolized victory. The southern façade displayed the imperial family and their servants. Both the lower panels of the northern and southern façade displayed acanthus tendrils. The east and west façade of this monument consisted of two panels. Both upper panels displayed the Aeneas and Lupine mythic accounts. Both lower panels displayed acanthus tendrils bearing many fruits which is considered as a symbol of eternity and prosperity and serves as a type of Tree of Life.<sup>823</sup> Thus, those who saw the Ara Pacis Augustae would understand and interpret Emperor Augustus as a divine saviour who gives continuing peace, eternity and prosperity of Rome.<sup>824</sup> John instead presented a different model to the first century Christian communities by showing the image of the slain Lamb which represented the crucified Christ: a figure who achieved victory not by killing others but by non-violence and self-giving ministry:

Revelation addresses the question of what makes for 'victory': Is it the fruit of imperial conquest, or is it the faithful rejection of empire and embrace of the way of God? Revelation's answer is crystal clear: it is only by rejecting empire and by maintaining loyalty to God and the Lamb that victory is won. More than simply urging its audience to reject the lie of the Pax Romana...Revelation exhorted its audience to practice nonviolent witness to the reality of God's victory over empire. This call was based on the apocalyptic insight that true 'victory' is founded on the 'blood of the Lamb' (12:11; cf. 5:6, 7:14). It was Jesus's willingness to be executed rather than to

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<sup>823</sup> David Castriota, *The Ara Pacis Augustae and the Imagery of Abundance in Later Greek and Early Roman Imperial Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). 25-28.

<sup>824</sup> Pollini, John, "The Acanthus of the Ara Pacis as an Apolline and Dionysiac Symbol of Anamorphosis, Anakyklosis, and Numen Mixtum", in *Von der Bauforschung zur Denkmalpflege: Festschrift für Alois Machatschek Zum 65 Geburtstag* edited by Martin Kybelik and Mario Schwarz (Vienna: Phoibos-Verlag, 1993), 181-217.

kill that constitutes 'victory.'<sup>825</sup>

Different from the imperial program which needs military warfare and control of earth resources for peace and abundance, the New Jerusalem vision does not need warfare for peace and prosperity. The writer of Revelation might use the image of the Tree of Life which is displayed on the Ara Pacis Augustae to symbolise prosperity and peace. But, the Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem functions as an anti-imperial image against the exploitation and domination of empires towards people, nations and the earth.

The second usage of the Tree of Life in the book of Revelation appears **in** the last chapter of Revelation (22: 2). In this text, the source of origin of the River of Life flows out from the slain Lamb who shares the throne with God. The image of the slain Lamb gave us the character of the divine who is self-sacrificing for people, nations and the earth communities as shown above. The slain Lamb brings people and nations into the Kingdom of God by his sacrificial death (5:9-10; 7:9-14). His way differs from the way of Roman emperors who achieve peace and prosperity through military warfare (11:7; 13:7). Moreover, the Tree of Life shows a new type of economic system that subverts Roman imperial economic and cultic structures for which someone's exploitation is required. The New Jerusalem has salvific economic systems to give essential elements without cost. The Tree of Life has a powerful image in relation to abundance and power, but not an image promoting imperial prosperity and power.

Lastly, the image of the Tree of Life affirms "a symbiotic relationship of

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<sup>825</sup> Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, 230.

interdependence between Earth and its inhabitants.”<sup>826</sup> The leaves of the Tree of Life heal people and nation (Rev. 22:2). Although the understanding of the ancient knowledge of actual healing trees may be based on this image,<sup>827</sup> “the Tree of Life brings healing for our world and for each one of us. That is the very heart of the Revelation’s message for us today - that God wants to heal our world.”<sup>828</sup> The Tree of Life offers a positive image of healing. But the healing in the New Jerusalem vision comes not directly from God or the slain Lamb, but the actual created world – through the leaves of a living tree. It unveils a symbiotic relationship within the earth communities. This causes us to rethink the relationship between human beings and nature. Human beings can survive and can be cured by eating the fruits of the Tree of Life and by using its leaves. Thus, the image of the Tree of Life suggests that human beings depend on the ecosystem, that they are an intrinsic part of earth’s communities. More importantly, human beings should live together with the earth communities, the ecosystem, in symbiosis. We human beings cannot survive with only our own abilities and without the help of nature and our neighbours. Human beings are a part of the earth communities, nothing more and nothing less. Moreover “this is another signal of how God loves creation and still calls it good – an important corrective to the vast dispensationalist imagery of destruction.”<sup>829</sup> The healing of the leaves of the Tree of Life is for humans and for the rest of creation as well as for the broken relationships between humans, nations, creation, and God. Contrary to Premillennial Dispensationalism’s insistence, God wants to heal people and nations of

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<sup>826</sup> Maier, “There’s a New World Coming! Reading the Apocalypse in the Shadow of the Canadian Rockies”, 170.

<sup>827</sup> Larry Rasmussen, “Trees of Life,” in *Earth Community Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 195-219.

<sup>828</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: the message of hope in the Book of Revelation*, 155.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid. 156.

the earth, not demolish them.

#### **6.4.6 Ethics in the Book of Revelation and the Application of an Ecological Reading to the Korean Interpretative Tradition**

The vision of the New Jerusalem illustrates the opposite imagery of the Babylonian vision. The background of the New Jerusalem is to be found in various Old Testament texts such as Gen. 1-3, Isa. 65-66, Ezek. 40-47, Zech. 14:8-11, Isa. 35:5-7; Joel 3:18 and so on.<sup>830</sup> Interpreted from an ecological perspective, the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22 is an earth-centered vision that shows us the dwelling place with God on earth not on another planet.<sup>831</sup>

The landscape of the New Jerusalem contrasts keenly with Babylon / Rome, which is characterized by famine, hunger, violence, and an exploitive system that squeezed people and the natural resources of the earth. On the other hand, God's holy city, the New Jerusalem, provides an utterly renewed urban landscape with a life-giving river at the centre of the city with enough food and water for all of the people without them having to pay for it.<sup>832</sup> For example, the word "δωρεάν, without cost" is applied two times in 21:6 and 22:17: the spring of the water of life as a gift ("δωρεάν, without cost") (21:6); the water of life as a gift ("δωρεάν, without cost") (22:17). By using these words, the author of the book of Revelation shows us that the "New Jerusalem is a vision of a gift economy where creation's resources are available to everyone, not just to people with money."<sup>833</sup> In other words, this imagery of the New Jerusalem is in essence the counter-economy of the city of the Babylon, Rome, which

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<sup>830</sup> Smalley, 561; Bauckham, 133; Beale, 1043-46

<sup>831</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 148.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid. 154-55.

<sup>833</sup> Rossing, "For the Healing of the World", 179.



replaces conspicuous accumulation with conspicuous generosity.<sup>834</sup>

An interesting point in the imagery of the New Jerusalem is that there is no more sea (Rev. 21:1). Why is this the case? This is because there is no longer any economic activity that provokes the exploitation of people and nature like the Roman Empire. Actually, for the Empire, the route of the sea played a pivotal role because it used the sea as an important shipping and trade route in controlling vast territories and peoples and amassing its prosperity. Therefore, the author of Revelation shows us liberation from the Roman Empire's oppressive, destructive, and exploitative relationship by showing the New Jerusalem vision which operates through a salvific eco-economic system under the care of slaughtered Lamb, Christ, who is self-sacrificing for humanity and the rest of creation. This leads us to imitate his virtue in life. In other words, it is imaginable that Rev. 21:1- 22:5 may offer a foundation of ecological ethics based on the biblical point of view in relation to God, humanity, and the rest of creation.

This eco-theological reading of Rev. 21:1-22:5 would allow an opportunity to reshape readings within Korean Protestantism, which mostly interprets the Book of Revelation to depict total destruction of the earth and individual salvation. As mentioned in the last chapter, commentaries which are published in South Korea focus on the total destruction of the earth and individual salvation in their exegesis. Again, a good example is in *The Oxford Bible Interpreter* (옥스포드 성서 주석). In its exegesis, authors focus on spiritual prosperity, individual salvation, and on the total destruction of the earth. Particularly, in the exegesis on Rev. 21:1-22:5, writers

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<sup>834</sup> Maier, "There's a New World Coming! Reading the Apocalypse in the Shadow of the Canadian Rockies", 179.

mention only briefly the ecological features of the New Jerusalem vision in relation to God, humans and the rest of creation without examining it in detail. *The Oxford Bible Interpreter* (옥스포드 성서 주석) does not bring the liberation of creation into focus, mentioning that “the Book of Revelation, especially Revelation 21:1-22:1-5, contains the last message of the Bible. It is the culmination of the Bible which is essential in a revelation of human salvation, particularly for Christian believers.”<sup>835</sup> The emphasis of this exegesis is not on salvation of the earth and its creation from Babylon’s oppression and exploitation by the destroyers of the earth, but on the salvation and glory of faithful Christian believers at the Parousia.

Following the interpretive work on Rev. 21-22, there are twenty-nine sermons that are recommended as exemplary models for application. The names of the sermons would be translated as “The present heaven and the earth will be totally destroyed and replaced by the new heaven and the new earth in the future”; “We have a straight-line history that leads present history to its end and to the creation of a new world”; “the faithful believers are one who have a revolutionary vision towards a new world”; “The saints must always pay attention to hear the voice of Lord”; “The New Jerusalem is a perfect place for faithful Christian believers”; “The mission of the saints is to preach the gospel of Christ to non-believers”, and so on.<sup>836</sup> The exemplary sermons provide an identification that the main message of the New Jerusalem vision is not for creation but for human beings, especially Christian believers, even only for true faithful Christian believers. Moreover, the Jerusalem vision clearly shows us the total

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<sup>835</sup> Jejawon, 옥스포드 원어 성경 대전 130: 요한계시록 12-20 (*The Oxford Bible Interpreter: Original Text Exposition on Revelation*) (Seoul: Disciples’ Publisher and Bible Net, 2002), 583-84.

<sup>836</sup> Jejawon, 옥스포드 원어 성경 대전 130: 요한계시록 12-20 (*The Oxford Bible Interpreter*), 598-612, 630-40, 648 -52, 662-71, 681-692, 701-09, 716-23.

destruction of the earth and its elements.

One good instance through which to demonstrate the tendency of this commentary's exegesis is the lack of comment on creation's salvation and explicit discussion of the total destruction of the earth in its interpretation of Rev. 21-22. From the starting point of Rev. 21:1, this commentary asserts that the vision of the New Jerusalem clearly shows the demolition of the current world and the earth.<sup>837</sup> This commentary gave three reasons why the vision tells us of the total destruction of the earth. The first is the manifestation of Rev. 21:1, "disappearance of the current heaven, the earth, and sea." The writers focus on the usage of the ancient Greek word, ἀπῆλθον, which is translated in English as "go away or pass away." The commentary said that this word clearly reveals the total destruction of heaven and the earth with a decisive tone.<sup>838</sup> The second is the usage of the Greek words οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι.. The interpreters say that the writer of Revelation emphasizes the fact with a decisive tone that the sea also no longer exists by placing those words in parallel.<sup>839</sup> The third is thorough contamination of the sea, the heaven and the earth. The interpreters say "heaven was the dwelling place of Satan before falling into the ground" (Rev. 12:7-9), and the earth was the place where the second beast came out (Rev. 13:11), and the sea was the place of origin which the first beast came out (Rev. 13:1). If so, then the first heaven, land, and the sea are the places that were eventually polluted by Satan and two beasts. This is why God has completely eliminated these defiled places in the end."<sup>840</sup>

The exegetical process of this commentary also shows a focusing on individual

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<sup>837</sup> Jejawon, *옥스퍼드 원어 성경 대전 130: 요한계시록 12-20 (The Oxford Bible Interpreter)*, 585.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid. 586.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid. 586.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid. 586.

and spiritual prosperity of the faithful believers. For example, the writers of this commentary interpret the state, “To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life” in Rev. 21:6 as the spiritual gift from God towards the faithful believers - those who look forward to the second coming of Christ at the Parousia. Moreover, the writers understood the main contents of Rev. 22:1-5 as the promise of spiritual prosperity, of immortality towards only the faithful Christian believers, with no mention of its ecological features and the relationship between God, humanity and the rest of creation.<sup>841</sup>

I argue that these results of interpretation of Rev. 21:1-22:5 clearly unveil not only the interpretive tradition of Korean Protestantism but also the importance of the doctrinal constructs. As discussed in earlier chapters, doctrinal constructs could be considered as guiding principles for reading of the Bible. In other words, with different doctrinal constructs, the meaning of the biblical passages would be interpreted very differently. The reading of Rev. 21:1-22:5 in this commentary is made by emphasizing the doctrinal constructs: total destruction of the earth and human salvation which appear as the main doctrinal constructs in the Premillennial Dispensational theology. Different from this commentary’s reading of Rev. 21:1-22:5, obviously, there are many interpretive options. As I mentioned in this chapter, these eschatological passages can be interpreted very differently, but the writers of this commentary do not explicitly introduce other interpretive options. Instead, they choose and emphasize the usage of the ancient Greek words depending on their doctrinal constructs so that they prove and defend their doctrinal constructs and the interpretive tradition of mainline Korean Protestantism. The readers such as ministers and theologians, and even others who

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<sup>841</sup> Jejawon, *옥스퍼드 원어 성경 대전* 130: *요한계시록* 12-20 (*The Oxford Bible Interpreter*), 653-61.

read this commentary, could interpret the whole central message of the New Jerusalem vision as total destruction of the earth and individual salvation of the faithful believers. Moreover, by doing this, the eschatological texts which illustrate the New Jerusalem vision can be considered a text which justifies the complete destruction of the earth. And unfortunately, this interpretive tradition will continue to be passed on to future Korean generations. It means that this interpretive tradition and the doctrinal constructs upon which Korean Christians focus will postpone the chance to find the foundation of environmental ethics in the Bible for Korean Christians.

In this situation of the mainline Korean Protestant Church's interpretive tradition, an ecological reading of Rev. 21:1-22:5 could play a pivotal role in reshaping its tradition and in improving the exploration of its ecological potential in the vision of the New Jerusalem, and in engaging the ecological agenda in Korean Christian communities.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

The Korean Protestant Church was introduced to a certain interpretation of biblical eschatology, namely Premillennial Dispensationalism, by the early western missionaries to Korea. Unfortunately, the main characteristics of Premillennial Dispensationalism which the Korean mainline Church has focused upon are doctrinal constructs that have a negative view in relation to nature and the earth, such as a total destruction of the earth, rapture, and individual salvation. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, these doctrinal constructs have played a crucial role in shaping and building the negative stance of Korean mainline Protestant churches towards nature. They read the biblical texts, and particularly the eschatological texts, in a sense that corresponds with these doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism. This pre-understanding and reading tradition has not only severely permeated the thought of Korean Christian congregations, but this abiding tendency of how to interpret the eschatological texts in the Bible shapes Korean Christians' indifference towards today's environmental issues and prioritizes certain biblical texts which seem to portray the catastrophic end of the earth and rapture while other texts are marginalized. The prioritized eschatological texts include 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16 which seem to depict the rapture of believers and a totally destroyed earth. Korean Protestants consider these eschatological texts as central texts for biblical eschatology. Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis demonstrated the ongoing influence of the interpretive tradition of Premillennial Dispensationalists and how it has affected the

mainline Korean Church as regards configuring Korean Christian attitudes towards the future destiny of the earth.

In particular, chapter 3 dealt with the chronological order of Premillennial Dispensationalist readings of the rapture idea found in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, beginning from the time of the early western missionaries to Korea (William L. Swallen) to the present (Hyeon Ggi Ryu and Byeongdo Kang), in order to reveal how this reading has been inherited by the mainline Korean Protestant Church. One clear result from the research is that one of the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism, the rapture, shapes Korean Christian believers to emphasize individual salvation and to validate the predicament of the world as well as escapism, and to not emphasize social issues including environmental issues. Thus, we shed light on an alternative way of reading and interpreting of this eschatological text. There are various ways of reading this eschatological text, such as Christ's conquering of the demons' realm and coming to meet God and Christ and then escorting them back into the earth. By showing various interpretive possibilities of 1 Thess. 4:13-18, this thesis argues that there are many candidates as doctrinal constructs for interpreting this eschatological text, such as Christ's conquering of the heaven and God's returning to the earth with believers at the Parousia. I think such factors would have a chance of reconfiguring the reading and interpreting tradition of Korean Protestantism regarding the New Testament eschatological texts.

Chapter 4 of this thesis addressed the interpretive tradition of Rev. 6-16 by showing Premillennial Dispensationalists' reading of it. They emphasize some of the doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism in the Korean mainline Church such as the catastrophic end and total destruction of the earth through God's

judgment at the Parousia. They also use a literal interpretation as the basic interpretive method for reading the Bible. It is the contention of this thesis that this reading strategy shapes the mainline Korean Church not only towards considering that the earth is a temporary residence but also that the current ecological predicament is a sign of the prelude to the Parousia. Moreover, they prioritize certain biblical texts which depict the totally destroyed world being brought about by catastrophic events through God's judgement. As Orr and Horrell point out, such an understanding leads Christians to be careless stewards concerning nature<sup>842</sup> and to have an anti-ecological stance.<sup>843</sup> In other words, the main doctrinal constructs in Premillennial Dispensationalism can shape the Christian's view, attitude, and ethical stance towards social, political, and environmental issues. Thus, the last part of chapter 4 introduced a variety of alternative ways in which to interpret the catastrophic images of Rev. 6-16, such as God's warning signs, socio-political convulsions, theophany, lament for Earth, and the damage to nature caused by the Roman Empire's evil power. The multi-dimensional understanding of Rev. 6-16 shown in chapter 4, which contains interpretations that suggest reconciliation and recovery of the earth, enables us to realize the importance of the value of ecosystems and the earth. It is important to know that even the main eschatological texts - 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16 - can be read and interpreted not to indicate total destruction or rapture but as presenting God's recovery plan for the earth and God's demolition of the destroyer of the earth. I expect that this factor could reshape or reconfigure the Korean mainline Church's interpretive tradition of the eschatological texts in the Bible. By extension, this could also enhance Christian believers' positive ethical sense of

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<sup>842</sup> Orr, "Armageddon Versus Extinction", 291-92.

<sup>843</sup> Horrell, *Bible and the Environment*, 8.



nature. We could maybe make more of the importance of developing and presenting that there are alternative doctrinal constructs – in contrast to those of Dispensationalism – as an alternative framework for interpreting these texts.

As shown above, the Korean mainline Church focuses on the eschatological-doctrinal constructs of rapture and total destruction of the earth and prioritizes certain apocalyptic texts - Thess. 4:13-18 and Rev. 6-16 - which seem to illustrate the catastrophic events of the earth. However, there are indeed many eschatological texts in the New Testament - such as Rom 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-22:1-5 - which depict hope, and the liberation of creation and an earth-centered eschatological vision. These two texts are the most frequently mentioned eschatological texts in support of positive ecological views of the earth. Moreover, these two texts illustrate the continuing existence of the earth, which is the dwelling place of human beings and the rest of creation.

Chapter 5 addressed Rom. 8:19-23 in order to seek its ecological implications for human being and rest of creation. I introduced five eco-eschatological doctrinal constructs (principles) for the interpretation of both texts, Rom. 8:19-23 and Rev. 21:1-22:1-5, in order to work against the main doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism such as total destruction of the earth, rapture, and individual salvation. I hope these five new eco-eschatological doctrinal constructs can reconfigure not only an understanding of the New Testament eschatology, but also suggest a new direction of interpretive tradition of Korean Christianity. These eco-eschatological doctrinal constructs are as follows: 1. An earth-centred eschatological vision, not rapture; 2. The covenant with the entire creation, expressed in particular through the incarnation of Christ; 3. Humanity as part of the community of creation; 4.

the self-expression (voice) of creation: silence, groaning, and praise to God; 5. The vision of a peaceable non-predatory kingdom of God (new creation). My basic and crucial ecological interpretive method and background of the eschatological texts that I intend to apply emphasizes the hope for the earth, because, as noted in chapters 5 and 6, the eschatological hope in the Christian tradition shapes moral values and attitudes of Christian believers.<sup>844</sup> Without this future hope and its conviction for the earth, it is difficult to encourage care for the ecosystem and the earth ourselves. Ecological hopelessness in the eschatological vision of the New Testament will inevitably lead us to resign our environmental obligation towards the earth, as shown in Premillennial Dispensationalism. In other words, the future catastrophic eschatological vision fosters escapism and indifference towards care for the earth. Thus, I outlined the five doctrinal constructs with the conviction of the hopeful future for the earth.

Rom. 8:19-23 depicts an image of the groaning and liberation of the whole κτίσις. As many biblical scholars have also pointed out, I consider κτίσις in Rom. 8:19-23 to denote “non-human creation”. Rom. 8: 20 illustrates κτίσις’s subjection to futility (τῇ ματαιότητι) which means the continuous inability of κτίσις to achieve God’s original goal for it.<sup>845</sup> However, by using the Greek words, ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι, at the end of verse 20, Paul assumed that the one who subjected κτίσις did so in hope. κτίσις is not subordinated to subjection in futility by its will, but by the will of the one who subjected it. Many biblical scholars consider God to be the main agent who ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι. But my interpretation, and other biblical scholars including Combs, Tonstad,

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<sup>844</sup> Olivier, “The Role of Eschatology and Futurology in the Quest for a Future in the Light of the Ecological crisis”, 29; Nürnberger, “Towards a New Heaven and a New Earth”, 148; Keller, “Eschatology, Ecology, and a Green Ecumenacy”, 95-96; Conradie, *Hope for the Earth*, 4.

<sup>845</sup> Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, *Greening Paul*, 77.

and Byrne, focuses on humanity itself and on its corruptive action to be the primary agent of κτίσις's bondage to decay, because it enables God to put κτίσις in subjection to futility. To be more specific, divine agency does not curse the entire κτίσις in bondage to decay. Indeed, humanity's action is explicitly the prime agent of it. The only part of nature that is affected by God's curse is the ground according to Gen.3. Rather, humanity's corruption affects all flesh to be caused to be subject to the bondage to decay according to the Genesis 1-11 account.<sup>846</sup>

All κτίσις waits for the children of God for achieving the liberation from its bondage to decay. We can identify τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ as Christian believers who are led by the Spirit of God (8:1-4). Such manifestations imply a significant role of Christian believers in the liberating of human beings and rest of creation from the bondage to decay. As Jewett noted, the children of God who were converted by the gospel can restore nature and the earth through their altered lifestyle and revised ethics.<sup>847</sup> In other words, Christian believers bear a crucial obligation for the recovery of all creation as part of the community of creation (the third doctrinal construct). This ecological interpretation of Rom. 8:19-23 would allow an opportunity to reconfigure the interpretative tradition of the mainline Korean Church which understands the main contents of the biblical eschatology to be cosmic disasters and individual salvation.

Chapter 6 shed light on Rev. 21:1-22:5 which is another influential eschatological text in the New Testament. The last two chapters of the Book of Revelation illustrate the New Jerusalem vision, which discloses the eschatological recovery of the entire creation, in particular the earth and its resident creation. The first thing John sees is a new heaven and a new earth. Many biblical scholars

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<sup>846</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>847</sup> Jewett, "The Corruption and Redemption of Creation," 35.

understand this to mean the total destruction of the entire universe and its new beginning. They focus on the usage of ἀπέρχομαι in Rev. 21:1 which generally has a meaning of ending and of discontinuity between the new and old. However, we saw ambivalent interpretive perspectives on the end time state of the current world in Jewish literature. In addition, if one focuses on John's usage of the Greek word καινός in Rev. 21:1-2, which means new in respect of quality, this manifestation could be interpreted as having the meaning of renewal. As Koester<sup>848</sup> and Eugene Boring<sup>849</sup> noted, the meaning of new in Rev. 21:1 not only means renewals of the current heaven and the earth, but also infers God's transforming the current world from distress into blessedness.

Chapter 6 of this thesis also dealt with another significant theological theme: that of "no more sea" in Rev. 21:1b. The New Jerusalem vision declares the disappearance of sea. I follow the opinion of many biblical scholars which understands this image in relation to the chaos tradition of the Bible which recognizes the sea as the place of evil. However, my ecological interpretation emphasized its relationship with the main route of exploitation and the abuse of people, nations, the earth and its resources by Rome. The Roman Empire achieved its prosperity and power through colonizing, and through abusing other people, nations, and their natural resources (thereby destroying the earth) by using the international sea trade route. As Bauckham pointed out, noting Aelius Aristides's celebration of the Roman empire's international sea route system,<sup>850</sup> the Roman empire supplied and obtained all goods and items from its colonized people and nations. In other words, the Roman Empire, which is

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<sup>848</sup> Koester, *Revelation*, 794

<sup>849</sup> Boring, *Revelation: Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, 220.

<sup>850</sup> Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*, 375-76.

symbolized as Babylon in the Book of Revelation, was a destroyer of the earth (Rev. 18:6) which enjoyed its prosperity through absorbing all kinds of resources of the earth through the exploitation and abuse of the earth and its residents. Thus, the New Jerusalem vision does not show the existence of the sea. God wants to protect people from Rome / Babylon by eliminating the main sea route of Rome that played a pivotal role in destroying the earth and its residents.

The most interesting and important point of the eschatological New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21-22 is that it is an earth-centered vision. Different from contemporary popular apocalyptic thought, which is epitomized by Premillennial Dispensationalism which asserts that faithful Christian believers will be raptured at the end of the world to meet Christ in the air, the eschatological New Jerusalem vision in Rev. 21-22 does not display the image of rapture. Instead, the New Jerusalem - which is the dwelling place of God - comes down out of heaven to earth so that God can dwell with his people and liberate them from their mourning, crying, and pain. Thus, the New Jerusalem vision clearly shows us the earth-centered kingdom of God.

The New Jerusalem vision also introduces a gift economy which is different from the oppressive economy of the Roman Empire. The New Jerusalem economy gives the essential elements of life without cost. We can find its implications in Rev. 21:6's manifestation: "living water without cost." The New Jerusalem grants priceless water - an essential element of life of the creation - without cost. Everyone in this city can obtain creation's resources, "not just people with money."<sup>851</sup> The New Jerusalem, which is decorated with precious jewels in the city's gates, welcomes even people who have no money. In other words, the New Jerusalem economy is the counter-

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<sup>851</sup> Rossing, "For the Healing of the World," 179.

economy of Babylon's. It is a salvific economy which takes care of the environment and marginalized people. We can also find God's care for the earth and its resources and residents through the symbol of "the Tree of Life" in Rev. 2:7; 22:2 which symbolizes prosperity, eternity, and life in the Roman Imperial culture's understanding of a sacred tree. Contrary to understanding of the sacred tree in Roman propaganda, which obtains prosperity by continuing victory with military warfare, abusing and colonizing other people, nations and their resources, the Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem presents a different model of victory by showing the image of the slaughtered Lamb which denotes the crucified Christ: a figure who completed victory not by military warfare and by killing other people and nations, but by non-violent, self-giving of his own life for others' prosperity, peaceful life, and eternity. The image of the slaughtered Lamb portrays to us the characteristics of Christ, the divine who is self-sacrificing himself for the earth and its residents. The image of the Tree of Life also implicitly alludes to the relationship between God, humans and nature. One of the main messages of the New Jerusalem vision is that God wants to help, protect, and heal the entire universe. However, the healing process comes not directly from God or the slaughtered Lamb, but through nature, through the leaves of the Tree of Life. The leaves of the Tree of Life cure wounded people and nations (Rev. 22:2), and even nature itself which was wounded by Roman Imperial power. This factor which the image of the Tree of Life contains provokes in us a need to reshape our understanding in terms of the relationship between humanity and nature. As Maier noted, it indicates a symbiotic relationship of interdependence between the earth and its residents, including human beings.<sup>852</sup> Neither humans nor nature can survive without each

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<sup>852</sup> Maier, "There's a New World Coming! Reading the Apocalypse in the Shadow of the Canadian

other's help. Human beings are a part of the earth, nothing more and nothing less. Our neighbor, nature, is an intrinsic part of the earth- community. The earth community should live together in symbiosis. Thus, these images in the New Jerusalem vision can suggest that God's eschatological plan is not total destruction of the entire universe as asserted by Premillennial Dispensationalists, but healing, protecting, and liberating from its bondage to decay.

As the children of God and followers of Christ, we need to take care of our neighbours - the earth and its residents - not by controlling it but by devoting ourselves towards it. This thesis proposes the opportunity of indicating the main principles of Rom. 8: 19-23 and Rev. 21-22's ethics and extending them to use in ecological themes by showing both the kenotic ethic in Paul's letter and the image of the slaughtered Lamb in the eschatological New Jerusalem vision in the book of Revelation. By introducing a kenotic ethic, Paul suggests the new ethical model to Christian believers which is modeled on Christ's self-giving and self-emptying for people and the rest of creation in order to reconcile and liberate all creation from its bondage to decay. John also proposes to Christian believers a new way of living by showing the image of the slaughtered Lamb which reflects the different power structure of God, different from Babylon's, and which illustrates nonviolent and self-giving resistance as a proper response against Babylon and its life style which leads all creation to be exploited and destroyed. Overall, the eschatological visions of the New Testament in both eschatological texts - Rom 8:19-23 and Rev. 21-22 - encourage us to imitate this new environmental ethics model which focuses on the flourishing of our neighbors, the earth and its residents in contrast to the

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Rockies", 170.

Dispensationalist's model which emphasizes total destruction of the earth and its residents and individual prosperity and salvation.

I used the Exeter ecological approach more broadly. Admittedly, applying another western theological method might seem to carry the risk of the importing another 'colonial' Western theology into the situation of the Korean mainline church, in a similar way to what occurred at the time of the early western missionaries to Korea. However, I think that we need to focus on the relevance of the approach itself for ecological exegesis rather than its regional-ethnic origin. It has not been my intention to criticize the early western missionaries to Korea. Rather, one of the criticisms of this thesis is of the negative impact of certain doctrinal constructs in premillennial dispensationalism, such as individual salvation, rapture, and total destruction of the earth, that the early western missionaries brought to Korea.

As mentioned above, Conradie, Horrell, Hunt and Southgate's ecological hermeneutics is valuable to exploring the answer concerning the indifference of the Korean Protestant churches towards the environmental agenda as well as to reconfiguring biblical interpretation of the Korean church in an eco-theological direction. Even though premillennial dispensationalists in Korea read the Bible using a 'literal' approach, their interpretation of the Bible has not been generated directly or solely from the biblical texts themselves. It is the result of a multifaceted interplay between several factors such as Scripture, interpretive tradition, and contemporary context, shaped by the doctrinal constructs that dominate that particular theological tradition. In other words, the reading and interpreting of the Bible does not start from a blank state, but rather it begins, as Conradie mentioned, through both factors: continuing interaction of the text in context and the interpretive tradition of the Bible in



Christian history and doctrinal constructs which were shaped by these interpretive processes and vice versa. My intention in this thesis has not been to challenge the place or authority of the Bible in Korean Protestant theology and ethics, but rather to show how one set of doctrinal constructs has shaped interpretation in a certain direction, and how a different focus might reconfigure interpretation in a more environmentally conscious and concerned way.

As we know, the Bible has been producing meaning - and ethics in particular - for Christian believers from past to present. It is a resource of change and inspiration to them. As such, it is a very significant task deciding how to read, understand, and interpret the biblical texts.

As shown above, this study has unveiled the interpretive tradition of the Korean mainline Church which focuses on certain doctrinal constructs - rapture, total destruction, and individual salvation - which are the main doctrinal constructs of Premillennial Dispensationalism and which have a significant effect upon readers with regards to the relationship between God, humanity, and nature. In this interpretive context, the five doctrinal constructs developed in chapter five of this thesis and my ecological approach significantly contribute to rereading and newly interpreting the biblical texts, in particular the eschatological texts in the New Testament. Moreover, on the basis of these interpretive dimensions of biblical interpretation, not only does this thesis propose new insights into the New Testament eschatological texts as a contribution to a contextual Korean Protestant Christian environmental ethic but I also offer to both Korean Protestant Christians *and* to Christians around the world an alternative perspective towards the environment, through a more ecologically positive understanding of New Testament eschatology. This thesis also could contribute to

reconfiguring the direction of the interpretive tradition of Korean Christianity and towards inspiring us to participate in the social agenda including contemporary ecological issues.

Currently, there is no wide ranging research on the eschatological visions of the New Testament written with the South Korean context in mind. Moreover, there are no biblical scholars who have produced a dedicated ecological reading of the Bible in Korea. This thesis will lay the foundation for an ecological interpretive tradition of the Bible not only in the context of the South Korean Church but also in a variety of contexts all over the world. Furthermore, this thesis and its further research on the ecological hermeneutics of the Bible will, I hope, be applied as a reservoir of valuable information in the Korean Protestant Church, as well as for the Christian believers who devote themselves in various parts of society such as schools, companies, hospitals, governmental offices, environmental groups, and universities, particularly for enlightening conversation with the many leaders, teachers and scholars in relation to biblical perspectives in contemporary environmental agendas and ethics.

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